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THESIS

**ANALYSIS OF THE MODERN INTER-ETHNIC
CONFLICT: CASE STUDY OF KOSOVO**

by

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March 2004

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KOSOVO**

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. JUSTIFICATION OF THE TOPIC

With the collapse of the Communist regime and disintegration of the Socialist Federative Republic Yugoslavia in the beginning of the 1990's, drastic changes have taken place in the security realm in South Eastern Europe. New countries have emerged and borders established in the aftermath of World War II have been redrawn. This process has been accompanied by a significant increase in nationalism, violence, and inter-ethnic hatred. Consequently, the region became an arena for several brutal armed conflicts in the 1990's. Ethnic cleansings, an uncontrolled flow of refugees, and collapses of belligerent's economies have had significant impact not only on stability in the Balkan region but also on the overall security situation in Europe. In this context, the 1998-99 crisis in Kosovo, to which this study is devoted, is especially important.

Five years have passed since in June 1999, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1244, which brought international administration under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) and established the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and international military presence (KFOR). Although significant steps were made in establishing a secure environment, promoting peace and inter-ethnic tolerance, creating a basis for substantial autonomy and self-government in Kosovo, the overall political solution, which will satisfy all participants of the former conflict, still has not been determined. Given that the crisis in Kosovo already had a spillover effect on the situation in Macedonia, Albania and destabilized southern regions of Presevo and Medvedja in Serbian proper, the unsolved problem of Kosovo poses a potential threat to security and stability in Europe. How will Greece, with its own Albanian minority, and Bulgaria, sensitive to the situation in Macedonia, react if conditions there will continue to deteriorate? This problem will become even more vital with the accession of Hungary in 2004, and Romania and Bulgaria in 2007 to the European Union. With the possible

disintegration of the federative state of Serbia and Montenegro¹, the latter may encounter problems with its own Albanian minority. More likely is that without the military might of the Serbian and Montenegrin Armed Forces (SMAF)² that are still under unconditional control exercised by Belgrade's authorities, Montenegrin leadership might employ nationalism to suppress the Albanian minority.

Ethnic and religious divisions are not unique to the former Yugoslavia. Similar situations can be observed in many regions of the world without resulting in ethnic cleansing or civil war. In numerous contemporary studies, a tendency exists to blame the Serbs for the outbreak of violence. Nevertheless, as Warren Zimmermann, former U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia points out, "nothing in their genes makes Serbs irrational or inhuman or 'Balkan'"³. Neither Kosovo Albanians nor Serbs are wrong in their demands or are more responsible for the outbreak of violence. Since there is no "right" or "wrong" side in inter-ethnic conflict, victims can be found on both sides.

Both ethnic groups, Kosovo Albanians and Serbs, have legitimate claims to the territory of the province. Both may not be fully deprived of their right to self-determination and participation in determining the future status of the province. The international community assumed the role of mediator and is facilitating the process of rebuilding civil society based on democratic principles. This is a long and difficult task that raises several significant issues. The most important is the future status of Kosovo. Given that the conflict already has a spillover effect on adjacent countries, the rhetoric about "democratic standards before status" and postponing the final settlement could challenge peace and stability not only in the region and beyond. Therefore, the international community has a strong need to establish a feasible policy for the final

1 The now Union of Serbia and Montenegro is formerly known as the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia consisting of the Republic of Serbia, including Serbia itself and the provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo, and the Republic of Montenegro. The agreement on the principles of relations between Serbia and Montenegro within the framework of a Union of States was signed by the President of the Federative Republic Yugoslavia Vojislav Kostunica, the Federal Deputy Prime Minister Miroljub Labus, the President of the Republic of Montenegro Milo Djukanovic, the Prime Ministers of Serbia and Montenegro Zoran Djindjic and Filip Vujanovic accordingly, on March 14, 2002.

2 The official name of the Yugoslav Army, formerly known as Vojska Jugoslavije (VJ), was changed in the Serbian and Montenegrin Armed Forces after the agreement on principles of relations between Serbia and Montenegro within the framework of a Union of States was signed.

3 Frank P. Harvey, *Ethnic Conflict and Third-Party Intervention: Evaluating NATO'S Use of Coercive Diplomacy in Managing Protracted Intrastate Crises in Bosnia and Kosovo*, [<http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/99-01/Harvey.pdf>] accessed on July 28, 2003.

settlement and be determined in its facilitation. Only extensive knowledge of the region, its history and roots of the conflict will help the international community to avoid the pitfall of taking one side or another that can undermine the entire process of the conflict resolution.

Not until the summer of 1998, when the outbreak of violence between ethnic Albanian guerrillas and Serbian authorities took place in the former Autonomous Province of Kosovo and the NATO military intervention against Serbia in March 1999, the region gained significant attention in the international media and was one of the main topics on the agenda of leading politicians in the United States, Europe, and Russia. Until that time, Kosovo was an insignificant subject for scholarly research, and the conflict between the Serbs and Kosovo Albanians caught politicians, academia, and the international public virtually unprepared and poorly informed. Since then, a growing array of academic publications have been dedicated to the history of the region, origins of the conflict, and its possible outcomes.

Many authors, in their attempts to explain the origins of the modern conflict in Kosovo, argue that the population of the province has always been exposed to so-called “ancient ethnic hatreds”. “Others argue that today's strains are artificial, manufactured by cynical postcommunist demagogues looking to legitimate their rule.”⁴ Neither school is absolutely right. In addition, different authors identify different times as a starting point of the conflict. The most commonly accepted view is that the conflict started at the beginning of the 1990's as a reaction of the Kosovo Albanians to the abolition of autonomy by the former President Slobodan Milosevic. However, the problem in Kosovo, evolving for centuries, and which eventually caused bloody interethnic conflict with substantial involvement of outside powers, is more complex in its origins. The reasons that led to the present state of affairs are more profound, and deserve more sophisticated explanations than the ones just mentioned.

This study argues that the root cause of the modern conflict in Kosovo is a combination of several factors that gained significant influence as a result of sudden changes associated with the emergence of a new post-Cold War international system.

4 William Hagen, “The Balkans' Lethal Nationalisms,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 4, July 1999, [<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/hagan.htm>] accessed on May 24, 2003.

Mutual animosity, resentment, and fear of domination by other ethnic groups, are the result of a steady accumulated grievance and historical experience of protracted conflict. The present situation in Kosovo became possible not only because of a considerable increase in ethnic nationalism exploited by the leaders of different communities during the last decade of the 20th century, but also because of the manipulation of the national aspiration of peoples throughout the history of Serbia and Montenegro. The modern conflict derived from the failure of two peoples to create a society based on co-operation and peaceful co-existence. The poor performance of the economy during the rule of Communism, the weakness of the federal government, caused by the numerous amendments to the Constitution made by Tito in an endeavor to suppress the looming danger of ethnic nationalism, only aggravated the state of affairs and eventually led to the bloody interethnic conflict.

B. THESIS ORGANIZATION

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the history of relations between the Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo during a relatively broad period of time, starting with the demise of the Ottoman Empire to present. Another goal is to explore the origins of the modern conflict, and to identify and examine the decisive factors that influenced the development of the contradicting positions of two peoples that eventually led to open hostilities. The study employs a descriptive approach and is based on a single case study. It reviews and examines contemporary scholarly literature dedicated to the subject. As primary sources, it employs books and reports on the topic, various governmental and international organizations' official documents, and the personal insights of the author. The main focus of the study is the history of relations between then Serbs and Albanians with an emphasis on nationalism.

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I, as an introduction, provides the justification for this topic, and discusses how the thesis is organized.

Chapter II presents a historical background of the major events that influenced and shaped relations between the Serbs and Albanians starting with the demise of the Ottoman Empire until the end of World War II. It analyzes the origins, roots, and causes

of the ethnic and political conflict in Kosovo. It identifies how two contradicting positions of conflicting ethnic groups were established, and briefly describes the influence of external powers as well.

Chapter III analyzes the so-called Albanian movement. Was it a genuine movement for the rights of a national “minority” oppressed by the “majority” or an attempt to gain more concessions from the central government in order to obtain a better position among other nationalities in the region?

Chapter IV investigates how activities of the Kosovo Albanians triggered a backlash of Serbian nationalism that had been suppressed during the rule of Communism. It examines the process of the division of society along ethnic, cultural, religious lines that eventually made the seizure of power possible by nationalistic conservatives. It will speculate why nothing was done to diffuse the situation before radical militants formed clandestine terrorist units that started open rebellion.

Chapter V presents the findings of the analysis and draws conclusions.

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II. THE SURPLUS OF HISTORY AND MYTHS

There is no present or future - only the past happening over and over again
- now.

- Eugene O'Neill

A. BETWEEN SERBS AND ALBANIANS

Starting with the advancement of the Ottoman Turks deep into the European continent in the 14th century, the Balkans, being a borderland between Christian civilization and the Islamic world, became a region of great instability for centuries. Kosovo, situated in the heart of the Balkans at the crossroads of major north-south and west-east communication routes with its rich natural resources, fertile soil and Mediterranean climate, is a home for two peoples, the Serbs and Albanians, who claim the right to possess it. Throughout the turbulent and complicated history of the region, filled with stories of bloody wars, the sacrifices of the population, and the never-ending struggle for independence and self-determination, two peoples developed conflicting national identities and contradicting positions over the status of Kosovo. The history of the region, or more exactly the interpretation of the history by both peoples, stirs many controversies and serves to legitimize their claim to control over the region.

B. ORIGINS OF THE CONFLICT AND ETHNIC IDENTITIES

1. Meaning of Kosovo for the Serbs

For most Serbs, Kosovo is an indisputable part of Serbia, the center of the mediaeval Serbian state established before the Ottoman invasion of the Balkans took place, and a spiritual and cultural nucleus that serves as a basis for creating a national identity of the Serbs. The territory of Kosovo is considered to be a sacred land, an important religious center, and its significance is often compared with the importance of Jerusalem to the Jews. The region's historical background is also essential to Serbian national identity as Tim Judah argues in his "Kosovo. War and Revenge" "...he who holds the past holds the future."⁵

⁵ Tim Judah, *Kosovo. War and Revenge* (Yale University Press, 2000), 2.

By 1166, when the new dynasty was established by Stefan Nemanja, the Serbian state started to expand far beyond its original territory in Raska towards the territory of modern Kosovo. The founder of the Nemanjic dynasty, Stefan Nemanja, abdicated in 1196 and became a monk. His son Stefan continued the expansion towards Kosovo and successfully conquered it because of the declining power of the Byzantine Empire and the seizure of Constantinople in 1204. Consequently, the Serbian state became the most powerful in the Balkans.

By 1219, the Serbian Orthodox Church acquired an autocephalous status and moved to Pec, where the patriarchy was established. Stefan's younger brother Rastko became the first Archbishop and eventually was canonized after his death as Saint Sava. This event is fundamental for the development of the autonomous Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as for the history of the Serbian state. It had a profound influence on the development of a national consciousness of the Serbs who "teetered on the brink between western Roman Catholicism and Byzantine, eastern Orthodoxy"⁶. Religion was and still is widely seen as a part of the Serbian national identity rather than an individual belief. Since the monarch and the leader of the clergy were members of the same family, they shared a common objective for the creation of a strong state and keeping power within the family. Moreover, "as most of the Nemanjic monarchs were canonized, their images were painted on the walls of the Serbian churches and monasteries. So, for hundreds of years, the Serbian peasant went to church, and in his mind, the very idea of Christianity, resurrection and "Serbdom" blended together."⁷ In so doing, the Nemanjic dynasty solved the crucial problem of legitimacy of their power. For instance, even today, Saint Sava is considered the family's saint patron by many Serbs who live not only in Kosovo but also in the rest of Serbia and Montenegro.

The power of the Nemanjic dynasty was based on a powerful central state and the strong influence of the Orthodox Church. Serbian rulers promoted trade and commerce because of the convenient geographical location of the state to main commercial routes going through it. They built roads and fortresses to guard them. They favored merchants and developed mining in Trepca and Novi Brdo, the main sources of revenues. Although

⁶ Judah, 3.

⁷ Ibid., 3.

the economy of the Serbian state was mostly agricultural, based on rich soil of Kosovo's plains, "progress in mining also occurred based on deposits of gold, silver, copper and tin."⁸ Gradually, Kosovo became the center of the Nemanjic state with its capital in Prizren.

Serbian rulers constantly built churches and monasteries. "Virtually the whole territory of southern Kosovo during the Middle Ages became the property of the big monasteries."⁹ The most important are the Patriarchate in Pec, Gracanica monastery near Pristina, and the monastery in Visoki Decani. The entire province acquired the Serbian name of Kosovo and Metohija. This name is Greek in origin, because in Greek, "metoh" means "church property". This fact is important, because it clearly articulates the Church's increasing influence. "Thus, the Serbian Orthodox Church... becoming closely tied to the power of the state and a strong supporter of state policies."¹⁰ "According to the Register of Cultural Monuments, in 1986, there were 372 cultural monuments in Kosovo and Metohija, of which 48% are Serbian, 20% Turkish, and 11% Albanian."¹¹ This statistic serves to prove the legitimacy of the 'historical claim' often employed by the Serbs to justify their demand to rule over the region.

The Nemanjic dynasty ruled Serbia for 200 years and reached its apogee during Stefan Dusan's reign in the mid-14th century. At that time, the Serbian state incorporated the present day territories of Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania, parts of Bosnia, and a large area in northern Greece, and was proclaimed an Empire. Kosovo became the geographical center of the Serbian state.

Never before or since has Serbian power or territory been so great. Today Serbian patriots look back to the age of Stefan Dusan as the most glorious in their history and regard him as a hero.¹²

Kosovo is also significant to the Serbs because of the famous Battle of Kosovo Polje that took place there in 1389. The Battle of Kosovo Polje is important to Serbian

⁸ Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo* (Columbia University Press, 1998), 8.

⁹ Vickers, 9.

¹⁰ Ibid., 7.

¹¹ Srećko Mihailovic, "Kosovo: Between Co-Existence and Permanent Conflict," in *The Lessons of Yugoslavia*, ed. Metta Spencer (Elsevier Science Inc, 2000), 279-307.

¹² Vickers, 10.

history because it was a starting point of the weakening of Serbia as a key power in the Balkan Peninsula. Even though it was fully incorporated into the Ottoman Empire, only by 1459 did the defeat inflicted by the Ottoman Turks in 1389 end Serbian statehood. Serbia ceased to exist as an independent entity, and for several hundred years, Kosovo was lost for Serbs. Since then, for many centuries, the Serbs have portrayed themselves as a people by the amount of suffering they have endured from Muslim Ottomans and associated with them Islamized Albanians. Although Serbs continued to live in Kosovo, they gradually became second-class citizens in the province they once ruled. “The Serbs therefore viewed the collapse of the medieval Serbian state as the central event in their history and found its explanation in the Battle of Kosovo.”¹³

Serbs were the leading force among the Christians to confront the Ottoman invasion, which represented a threat of Islamization to the mainly Christian population of the Balkan Peninsula. For the first time, the Serbian army encountered advancing Ottoman Turks in 1371 during the battle on the river Maritsa in modern Bulgaria and suffered defeat. “Historians regard this battle as being of far greater military significance than famous Battle of Kosovo [Polje].”¹⁴ However, the latter battle had a more profound political impact.

The immediate result of the Battle of Kosovo Polje was not clear. Both sides suffered tremendous losses, including the loss of their leaders, and were not able to further pursue their objectives. The struggle amongst the Serbian nobility for power was one of the aftermaths of the Battle and served as a basis for the creation of the influential myth about Kosovo. As a response to contemporary needs, the defeat was transformed into a kind of moral victory for the Serbs and served as an inspiration for the future. The Serbian king Lazar, who died in the battle, is reputed to have said “[b]etter it is for us to accept death from the sword in battle than to offer our shoulder to the enemy... Sufferings beget glory and labors lead to peace.”¹⁵

¹³ Ibid., 15.

¹⁴ Judah, 4.

¹⁵ Ibid., 8.

Even if these words are only the product of medieval writers or Orthodox clergy and served to legitimize Lazar's underage son's ascent to power, their impact is very significant even today. "As always in the Balkans [...] the truth is not what matters, it is what people believe it to be."¹⁶ The myth profoundly influenced Serbian nationalism aimed to liberate Kosovo from the yoke of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century. Serbian nationalistic leaders also extensively employed it at the end of the 1980's to gain political benefits in their pursue for power. Kosovo, with its myth, was a key element in preserving the Serbian national identity as a hope for resurrecting the Serbian state. Therefore, for the Serbs, renouncing Kosovo would virtually mean giving up their national and spiritual legacy.

2. The Meaning of Kosovo for Albanians

Albanian claim for Kosovo is based on several elements. The most important are the fact that Albanians constitute the majority population in Kosovo and that the province became the cradle for their national movement. Indeed, according to the census of 1991, Albanians composed 1,607,690 or 82.2%¹⁷ of the overall population in Kosovo.

Many Albanian scholars argue that Albanians are descendants of Illyrians and Dardanians, who lived in Kosovo long before the first Slavs arrived there. They have always constituted a majority of the population in the region, even in the medieval Serbian kingdom. Therefore, they are completely within their rights to claim the territory of Kosovo. To the contrary, "many Serbs believe, equally falsely, that there were no Albanians at all in Kosovo before the end of the seventeenth century."¹⁸ However, arguing around the subject of who was there first will lead nowhere.

Before the arrival of the Ottomans in Kosovo, the population of the province was not homogeneous. It consisted of Serbs, Vlachs and Albanians. "These are [Vlachs and Albanians] mentioned several times in Dusan's code, usually together."¹⁹ As a minority, they received special treatment in the Nemanjic Kosovo. "But all the evidence suggests

¹⁶ Ibid., 2.

¹⁷ Julie Mertus, *Kosovo. How Myths and Truths Started a War* (University of California Press, 1999), 316.

¹⁸ Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo. A Short History* (New York University Press, 1998), XXXII.

¹⁹ Malcolm, 53.

that they [Albanians] were only a minority in Medieval Kosovo.”²⁰ The relations between the Serbs and Albanians were not always hostile. For instance, during the famous Battle of Kosovo, some Albanian units fought on the Serbian side. The tension developed throughout the two past centuries, as a result of a sequence of bloody wars, substantial involvement of outside powers and the influence they exercised.

During the 500 years Ottoman rule, many Albanians converted to Islam and eventually attained a superior position over the Serbian Orthodox population. The ethnic identity of Kosovo Albanians was built based on Islamic traditions in relentless rivalry with Orthodox Serbs for political and economic supremacy in the region. “Religion not nationality was the fundamental factor in the Ottoman concept of governance.”²¹ The main reasons for religious conversion were economic rather than a matter of beliefs. Conversion to Islam ultimately meant the allocation of better arable land, paying less taxes and the possibility of making a career on Porte’s state service. For nobility, it also meant keeping control over their domains and the preservation of feudal privileges. For the lowest level of the Albanian population strata, conversion to Islam also meant the continuation of a habitual way of tribal life in which Serbs had no place. Thus, by converting to Islam, Albanians were able to gain social, political, and economic dominance in Kosovo. Since they did not have a strong national church, as Serbs did over the centuries, they were converted in higher proportions. Therefore, the initial division of the population in Kosovo was based on religion.

The continued increase in the conversions of the Albanians eventually led to expansion of their power in the province, brought them privileges and strengthened mistrust between the two communities. Being in an inferior position derived from the status of Christians in a Muslim state, the Serbs began slowly to emigrate from the region to other parts of Serbia. The “Great Serbian Exodus” of 1690, led by the religious leader Patriarch Arsenije Carnojevic III, is the most significant event that further misbalanced the ethnic distribution in Kosovo. During the Austro-Ottoman war, the Serbs supported Austria hoping for a possible liberation of Kosovo from Ottoman rule. As a result of the defeat of the Austrian army and fearing repressions from the Porte, “37,000 Serbian

²⁰ Ibid., 57.

²¹ Vickers, 19.

families from the Kosovo region [...] left for exile in Hungary”²². The mass departure of the Serbs “opened the way for the resettling of Kosovo by Albanians, lured down from the hills by the fertile land and encouraged by the Ottomans”²³. The Albanian Muslims were gradually replacing the Serbian Orthodox population and became a majority. For that reason, ethnic migrations are crucial in understanding why a modern conflict in Kosovo, largely based on demographic upheaval, became possible.

C. FROM THE BALKAN WARS TO WORLD WAR II

1. Beginning of the Conflict

The first serious conflict between the Serbs and Albanians was provoked by the Russo-Turkish war of 1876-1878. Serbia and Montenegro took advantage of the weakening power of the Ottoman Empire, expanded their territories and conquered the northern and eastern parts of Kosovo. Serbia became an independent state. These actions initiated new waves of migrations directed in and out of the region. Thousands of Albanians were forcibly expelled and fled to the territory of Kosovo, which remained under Ottoman control. “The operations of the Serbian army provoked a wave of refugees ...as an estimated 30, 000 Albanians deserted those parts of the region which the Serbian army occupied.”²⁴ The practice of burning houses and mosques in order to prevent the Albanian population from returning became the norm. This was not just a spontaneous hostility driven by the wish for revenge by local Serbs. It was an official policy, since military units were involved in creating territories with a homogeneous Serbian population.

2. Prizren League and Beginning of the Albanian National Movement

As already mentioned, Kosovo became important for the development of the Albanian national identity. The province became a cradle for the Albanian national movement that was focused on Albanian nationalism. During the Russo-Turkish war, in 1878, the Prizren League was formed in Kosovo and played a significant role in the Albanian national movement. As a response to the threat of partition of territories populated mainly by Albanians amongst the Balkan states, the purpose of the League was to organize military and political resistance and unite these territories “into one political

²² Ibid., 29.

²³ Ibid., 28

²⁴ Ibid., 43.

and administrative unit”²⁵. The foundation of the Prizren League was the first attempt to unite all Albanians, both Muslims and Christians, descending from numerous clans and speaking different dialects into one force with the same objective. In this sense, this national movement can be considered progressive.

Initially, the interests of the Muslim clergy, Catholic and Orthodox priests and wealthy landowners, who created the League, were compatible with the goal of the Ottomans to keep control over the region. For the Albanian nobility, sovereignty of the Porte was a protection of their political, economical and religious rights and a guarantee of their power. Autonomy within the Empire would fit their interests the best. However, the declining Ottoman state was unable to compete with dynamically developing newly independent Balkan states over power. Moreover, the situation was largely influenced by the struggle amongst major European states, including Russia, for the balance of power in Southern Europe. Encountering this pressure, Porte failed to defend its interests on the Balkan Peninsula. Therefore, it was not able to ensure the unity and cohesion of the Albanian-populated lands. Relations between the League and the Ottoman state gradually deteriorated and Albanians started to consider the possibility of independence.

“Meanwhile, the anti-Christian tenor of the League worried many non-Muslim Albanians, who wavered over joining it.”²⁶ However, conservative Muslims, who constituted a majority among leaders of the League, outnumbered their voice. As a result of the peace settlement of the Congress of Berlin and signing the treaty between Serbia and the Ottoman Empire, the Serbian army withdrew from Kosovo. Intolerance towards Serbs, who continued to live within the Ottoman Empire and were mainly Orthodox Christians, increased. Both, Turks and Albanians, regarded Serbs as the closest supporters and allies of the Russians and, thus, were considered enemies. The Serbian population continued to flee Kosovo in increasing numbers because of the threats, intimidation and fear of oppression.

²⁵ Ibid., 44.

²⁶ Ibid., 47.

By 1880, when the Prizren League took control of Kosovo, the region drowned in disorder and chaos “where the Koran and the rifle are the only law”²⁷. “There are few Servian villages which are not robbed periodically of all their sheep and cattle.”²⁸ Albanian neighbors created such conditions that the Serbs could not endure. “Blood can be wiped out only with blood”, wrote Edith Durham, the redoubtable English traveler and writer, following her trip to northern Albania and Kosovo in 1908.²⁹ “Hunger, want and disease are the natural accompaniments of daily oppression.”³⁰ “At the same time the Mujahidin were actively encouraging a policy akin to ethnic cleansing.”³¹

Most of Kosovo remained part of the Ottoman Empire until the Balkan war broke out in 1912. The decades before can be characterized in general terms as perpetual unrest in territories populated by Albanians. They continued to advocate for more decentralization of the Ottoman Empire and their demand for national autonomy in these regions only grew with time. It was expressed in frequent insurrections accompanied by a sharp increase of violence. “A clash was therefore inevitable because the Young Turks were totally opposed to nationalism within the Empire and believed that only enforced Turkification of all subjects would keep the Empire intact and strong.”³² Therefore, all attempts of rebellion aiming for autonomy and an awakening of national consciousness, were fiercely suppressed by the central power. Deeply disaffected by the reforms of the Young Turks, Kosovo Albanians “launched yet another insurrection [...] after population had refused to pay new severe taxes levied from Istanbul on imported goods”³³. Interestingly enough, this kind of strategy will be often employed by Kosovo Albanians throughout the 20th century. No attempt was made to find a political solution, but the rejection of governmental institutes, along with armed resistance, inevitably led to an escalation of violence.

27 Judah, 14.

28 Ibid., 14.

29 Ibid., XIX.

30 Ibid., 14.

31 Ibid., 47.

32 Ibid., 67.

33 Ibid., 70.

The Albanian national resistance movement was weakened by the absence of an universally recognized Albanian authority able to coordinate and lead all segments of society. As a result of a strong clan system, tribes continued to act independently in their own interests. Isolated Slav settlements and Ottoman garrisons were the target of frequent attacks. Central authorities responded with the imposition of severe terror. “An estimated 150,000 people fleeing Kosovo, of whom roughly 100,000 were Serbs, just under a third of Kosovo’s estimated overall Serbian population.”³⁴ The negative aspect of the Albanian movement was that the Serbian population suffered calamities from being caught in the clash between the Albanians and Ottoman Turks. “A Serbian agent Grigorije Bozovic noted in 1912:

The Albanians are on the verge of becoming a nation, and they to settle their issue in Kosovo, and that they are neither the conquerors nor the conquered. We fall between them and the Young Turks, and both will throw their rage at us.³⁵

3. New Cycle of Violence

The ideology of European nationalism served as a foundation for the emergence of the Balkan states created in the 18th and 19th centuries. Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Albania could be characterized as irredentist nation states. Thus “as irredentist nations – that is, as nations committed to the recovery of their ‘unredeemed’ national territories. Their legitimacy rested entirely on their ability to embody the national ‘imagined community’.”³⁶ Since segments of their population were still incorporated into the declining Ottoman Empire, they were eager to expand their territories by virtue of war.

The period including the Balkan Wars and following by World War I brought more suffering to the civilian population. Combat operations and movement of belligerent armies were accompanied by atrocities committed by all sides.

Entire Albanian villages had been turned into pillars of fire... There the Serbs broke into Turkish and Albanian houses and performed the same task in every case: plundering and killing.”³⁷

³⁴ Ibid., 71.

³⁵ Ibidem.

³⁶ William Hagan, “The Balkans’ Lethal Nationalisms,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 4 (July 1999).

³⁷ Vickers, 77.

Since Albanians fought together with the Ottomans against the Balkan League formed by Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro, the civilian population was paying the price. Serbia retook the territory of Kosovo and advanced further to northern Albania.

Albanians were not able to secure the unity of their territories mainly because Serbia already had a state with an organized modern army and was keen to liberate territories, which historically constituted “Old Serbia”. Serbia cultivated the development of a national conscience and widely employed nationalism based on history and myths of Kosovo.

Thousands of young Serbian volunteers rushed to join the army, yearning to avenge the Battle of Kosovo... The realization that Kosovo might finally be liberated after more than five centuries fired their imaginations and emotions, and the Serbian army was unstoppable.³⁸

The new Albanian state, which was formally recognized by the Treaty of London in 1913, failed to unite all territories predominantly populated by the Albanians. Notably, the Albanian population of Kosovo was almost half the population of Albania itself. Further, the borders of Albania were still in dispute; therefore, reasons for continuing hostility were still present. Thus, the groundwork was laid for raising an Albanian question needing a resolution.

During World War I, Serbia encountered a war on two fronts. By 1915, the Serbian army was defeated by the Austro-Hungarians and had to be withdrawn from Kosovo. The Albanians of Kosovo did not have to wait long until they could get their revenge. “An estimated 100,000 Serbs died on the grueling trek through Kosovo and Albania.”³⁹

Kosovo was lost to Serbia until it was reoccupied in 1918 by the Serbian army and incorporated into a new state called the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Eventually, King Alexander changed the name of the new state to Yugoslavia with the establishment of a dictatorship in 1929. The new Yugoslav state was officially defined as

³⁸ Ibid., 76.

³⁹ Ibid., 92.

“one nation with three names”⁴⁰. However, Yugoslav nationality, hoping to become the basis for the new state long before being actually created, never came into existence. One of the acute problems the Yugoslav government encountered was national identity. “At this time the national balance was approximately 43 per cent Serbian, 23 per cent Croatian, 8,5 per cent Slovenian, 6 per cent Bosnian Muslim, 5 per cent Macedonian Slavic, and 3,6 per cent Albanian, with the final 14 per cent composed of the minorities.”⁴¹ As the name suggested, the new state was a country of southern Slavs, but Albanians are not Slavs. They did not want Kosovo to become part of the new state because it would mean the reestablishment of Serbian or Yugoslav rule exercised from the capital of Belgrade.

The ethnic Albanian population of Kosovo found it most difficult to adjust to the new order in the Europe-like organized state where they lost all privileges given to them during Ottoman rule. The Albanians found themselves in a situation when ruled by the former “*Rayah*”⁴² who were inferior to them and where treated as serfs until recently. “Old and new hatreds had deepened between Serbs and Albanians. A sense of fear, anger and betrayal now pervaded the Albanian villages of Kosovo.”⁴³ From the early beginnings of the new state, Albanians started to resist the central authorities.

The actions of the new Serbian authorities were highly unpopular amongst the Kosovo Albanians. Every attempt at reforms in Kosovo ended in failure. The government’s initial attempts to consolidate and strengthen its power in Kosovo encountered fierce Albanian resistance, known as “*kacaks*”. The emergence of the “*kacak*” movement was a result of military and gendarme repression aimed to disarm Albanians and install Serbian authorities. Many Albanians were freedom fighters but to the authorities, they were outlawed bands of guerillas. In the words of a local Serbian

40 Ibid., 95.

41 Ibid., 103.

42 Ibid., 66.

43 Ibid., 98.

politician, they were described as “...not plain criminals, political or social brigands, as such, but a particular type of Albanian outlaw [...] who have become a revolting sickness, nowadays assuming a new nationalist, and consequently antistate form...”⁴⁴

As early as 1918, prominent Albanian leaders from Kosovo founded the Committee for the National Defense of Kosovo based in Albania in Shkodra. The Committee had no official status, but enjoyed substantial support from the Albanian government. At that time, leading Kosovo Albanians participated in Albanian government and parliamentary life. Their irredentist aspirations were focused on the creation of Greater Albania including territories populated by Albanians in Montenegro, Serbia, Macedonia and Albania itself. Therefore, the theoretical foundation of the Committee was similar to that of the Prizren League, but emphasized the creation of an independent Albanian state.

However, as in earlier instances, Albanian leaders were not seeking political peaceful settlements with the central government, at this time represented by Serbian authorities. The main goal of the Committee was the encouragement of anti-Serbian insurgency. The Committee smuggled weapons to Kosovo and organized armed resistance. It “established ties with Italians, Macedonian insurgents, and various Croat groups”⁴⁵; in other words, those who were in conflict with the Serbian government and eager to overthrow it. Again, Albanian leaders acted in the same manner they first adopted in their struggle during the Ottoman rule. Apart from conducting armed rebellion, they also “urged Albanians not to pay the taxes and to refuse to serve in the army”⁴⁶.

The Yugoslav Constitution, based on the results of 1920 elections, reflected the interests of the Serbian political elite to centralize power in Belgrade. Religious, ethnic and language differences of non-Slav minorities were largely neglected by the government. It pursued a policy of assimilation towards minorities and Albanians were not an exclusion. “Serbian propaganda simultaneously dehumanized Albanians, presenting them as utterly incapable of governing themselves and as the sort of element

⁴⁴ Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia* (Cornell University Press, 1984), 293.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 302.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 304.

that ought to be exterminated.”⁴⁷ The Albanian language was banned for official matters and all educational systems had to be conducted using the Serb-Croat language. “Albanian philanthropic and cultural societies were closed, along with Albanian schools.”⁴⁸ During agrarian reform, land was expropriated from the Albanians on the pretext of a lack of documents proving ownership and claims that they possessed excessive amount of land. Land had to be allocated in accordance with the number of family members. This measure brought unintended results. It affected the birth rate of Albanian families. The more family members one has, the more land he will be allocated. The Albanian population of Kosovo therefore continued to grow and changed the ethnic balance even more in favor of the Albanians.

According to the Yugoslav census of 1921, “based on the Albanian mother-tongue, out of 436,929 inhabitants in Kosovo, 280,440 or 64,1 per cent were Albanians”⁴⁹. However, these figures may be unreliable as suggested by foreign observers “there were at least 700,000 Albanians in Yugoslavia in the 1920s”⁵⁰. In general, the Yugoslav government largely considered the Albanian population of Kosovo to be an untruthful element ready for revolt at any given moment. Fearing the strengthening of influence of irredentist Albania over the Albanian population in Kosovo that might cause problems in the future, and willing to reestablish balance to the population, the Serbian government initiated a policy of colonization of Kosovo, which lasted until 1941.

Yugoslav authorities dominated by Serbs encouraged Serbian and Montenegrin settlers to come to Kosovo. The colonization was conducted in two waves and “perhaps 70,000 people altogether, equivalent to more than ten per cent of Kosovo’s entire population”⁵¹ came to the province. The colonists enjoyed a wide range of advantages and incentives. According to the Law on the Colonization of 11 June 1931, “the colonist were granted up to 50 hectares of land, free transport to the place of settlement, the free

⁴⁷ Ibid., 303

⁴⁸ Vickers, 99.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 95.

⁵⁰ Malcolm, 268.

⁵¹ Ibid., 282.

use of communal forests and pastures, exemption from any taxation for three years, and occasionally houses.”⁵² The relations between settlers and Albanians were tense. Antagonism derived from the fact that most of the land given to colonists was expropriated from the suspected *kacaks*. Moreover, even if local Albanians were not excluded from the process of agrarian reform, it was conducted in favor of the Slavs. It was estimated that out of 14,000 families to whom the land was allocated, only 4,000⁵³ were Albanians. *Kacaks* continued their attacks against the colonists until the mid-1920s.

Along with colonization, Albanians were encouraged to emigrate from Yugoslavia. Some 150,000⁵⁴ people are believed to have left for Turkey in the years between 1918 and 1941. In 1938, Yugoslavia and Turkey signed an agreement that foresaw the emigration of 200,000⁵⁵ people from Kosovo under the pretext of the repatriation of the ‘Turkish Muslim’ population. In response to Albanian criticism at the League of Nations in 1929 over the policy implemented in Kosovo, the Yugoslav delegation stated: “ [o]ur position has always been that in our southern regions, which have been integral parts of our state...there are no national minorities.”⁵⁶ Only World War II hampered the implementation of the Yugoslav government plans.

With the beginning of World War II, Kosovo was divided into three sectors by the Axis Powers. The strategically important region of Mitrovica, with its lead and zinc-producing Trepca mining, was attached to Serbia, and occupied by Germany. Bulgaria took a small part on the north-east portion of the region. The rest of the province, together with the north-western part of Macedonia, was occupied by Italy, and as announced by the Italian occupation authorities “would come under civil administration as part of the kingdom of Albania”⁵⁷. The Kosovo Albanians were very enthusiastic. Even though Italians were occupiers, they united most of the Albanian-populated areas in

⁵² Vickers, 106.

⁵³ Malcolm, 280.

⁵⁴ Judah, 22.

⁵⁵ Ibidem.

⁵⁶ Malcolm, 268.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 291.

one state. By decrees of October 1941 and February 1942, all the inhabitants of Italian-occupied Kosovo, including Slavs, became citizens of Albania. Thus, even if for a short period of time, Greater Albania was created.

In occupied territories, German authorities formed various types of military or militia-type units. With the personal approval of Hitler, an SS Division Skenderbeg, consisting of 12,000⁵⁸ men, was formed in Kosovo for activity in the province. The ranks of the Division were filled with German officers and Albanian volunteers as soldiers. A new cycle of violence broke out because the Albanians seized this opportunity to exact revenge on the Serbian population. Serbian settlers who came to the region during colonization were the primary subject of attacks. "Units of the division gained an unenviable reputation, apparently preferring rape, pillage, and murder to fighting, particularly in Serbian areas."⁵⁹ As a result of Kosovo Albanians' attacks, a part of the Serbian population fled to Serbian proper. Herman Neubacher, the chief German political officer in Belgrade, calculated "that since 1941, 40,000 Serbs and Montenegrins had been driven out of Kosovo".⁶⁰ Apparently, the Albanians were not very reliable servicemen as the units of the division for susceptible to mass desertions. By early October 1944, the commander of the Army Group "E" was informed whose total strength of the Skenderbeg Division had fallen to 3,500 and "the division is without any particular will to fight"⁶¹. As the German commander of the Division suggested "Albanians had not developed since the time of Skenderbeg in the fifteen century, they had developed no concept of 'state' or 'nation'...They went on the attack only as long as there was something to steal."⁶²

Like the Nazis who had tremendous difficulties in collaborating with Kosovo Albanians, the Communists had encountered even more serious problems in Kosovo. For instance, in 1937, only 23 Albanians⁶³ were members of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY). Until the end of the war, Partisans were able to recruit only an

⁵⁸ Judah, 28.

⁵⁹ Ibidem.

⁶⁰ Malcolm, 305.

⁶¹ Ibid., 311.

⁶² Judah, 29.

⁶³ Vickers, 115.

insignificant number of Albanians and only individuals joined the CPY. For most Albanians, the CPY was associated with the Serbs and the return of Yugoslavia, that is to them, Serbian rule. They considered the CPY as an “alien Pan-Slavic organization, which ignored their national aspirations.”⁶⁴ To propagate Communist ideas and in order to gain support among Kosovo Albanians, Tito established strong links with the Communist party of Albania led by Enver Hoxha. Some light concessions toward Albanian nationalism were made and slogans of “self-determination, up to and including secession”⁶⁵ were widely employed in CPY’s rhetoric.

D. CONCLUSIONS

Kosovo has a surplus of history and myths that serve to legitimize the “historical claims” of Kosovo Serbs and Albanians to control the disputed territory. “The Serbs call Kosovo the Serbian Jerusalem while the Albanians see it as their Piedmont.”⁶⁶ Under the influence of different historical events, two peoples developed distinct ethnic identities largely based on constant opposition to each other over the political status of the region that eventually led them to a prolonged conflict. Even though different ethnic groups exercised control over the region at different times, ultimately Serbs became the prevailing power.

In competition for control over Kosovo, the Serbs managed to establish their rule in the province by the end of World War I because they had several significant advantages over their Albanian rivals. The most important is that Serbs had their own independent state with all the necessary institutions including a central government, a modern armed forces and police, a developed fiscal system and a judiciary. Neither the newly independent Albanian state with its inferior military and economic capabilities compared to those of Serbia nor the Kosovo Albanians with their lack of unity and absence of any state institutions even in rudimentary form, could withstand armed conflict with Serbia. Furthermore, the Serbian state experienced comprehensive political and diplomatic support of the Entente states, in particular Great Britain and France, not to mention the traditional strong ties maintained between the Serbs and Russia.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 123.

⁶⁵ Judah, 30.

⁶⁶ Constantine P. Danopoulos and Adem Chopani, “Albanian Nationalism and Prospects for Greater Albania,” in *Crises in the Balkans*, ed. Constantine P. Danopoulos and Kostas G. Messas (Westview Press, 1997), 169-191.

The violent character of the conflict derives from the readiness of both peoples to apply brutal force although on different pretexts. Albanians believe that they have a legitimate right for an armed resistance to Serbian authorities and secessionism because they constituted a majority of population in the region, which was forcefully incorporated into the Serbian state. They consider Serbian rule to be a foreign power and seek any possibility to resist. For Serbs, Albanians represent a threat always allied with foreign invaders whether it was the Ottoman Turks, the Austro-Hungarian Empire or Nazi Germany. They were all considered to pose a challenge to sovereignty and the survival of the independent Serbian state. Due to the historical experience, the Serbs believe that the Kosovo Albanians are a “fifth column” and their main objective is separatism. Therefore, they have to be persecuted by all means available to the state machinery.

III. “MAJORITY RULE” VS. “MINORITY RIGHTS”

Kosovo, or Kosova, could be either Serbian or Albanian, but not both.⁶⁷

A. A “TIME BOMB” IN “BALKAN’S POWDER KEG”

The majority of Kosovo Albanians as well as Serbs still highly reveres Tito, and sees the era of Yugoslavia during Communism as being the most prosperous and stable of times. Tito was a charismatic leader and his power was based on his own popularity and image of a hero and a great leader of the Yugoslav people during World War II. However, he did not hesitate to use brute force when he felt it was necessary, especially to suppress rare manifestations of nationalism in the federative units. For an average Yugoslavian citizen, regardless of ethnic origin, Tito’s era was associated with high standards of life, an ability to travel, study and work abroad freely.

On the other hand, during Tito’s rule, besides frequent amendments to the existing constitution, Yugoslavia received new constitutions four times in less than 30 years. The Yugoslav Constitutions were adopted in 1946, 1953, 1963 and 1974. They were also amended in 1967, 1968, 1971, 1981 and 1988 to keep pace with the socio-political, cultural, and economical development of the state. Nonetheless, the most pressing problem of relations among nationalities in Yugoslavia has never been solved. Moreover, because of frequent changes in the constitution, the power of the federal government was eventually undermined and leadership of the republics and the autonomous provinces was gradually increasing their authority at the local level. In doing so, Tito planted a “time bomb” in the “Balkan’s powder keg”. Due to his policy of suppression of national aspirations, such leaders as Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia and Franjo Tudjman in Croatia, came to power on the wave of increased nationalism at the end of the 1980’s and the beginning of 1990.

B. THE AUTONOMOUS REGION WITHIN THE FEDERATIVE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA

In July 1945, Kosovo was annexed formally to Serbia. It was declared the “Autonomous Region of Kosovo and Metohija” and became a constituent part of Serbia

⁶⁷ Hugh Poulton and Miranda Vickers, “Kosovo Albanians: Ethnic Confrontation with the Slavic State,” in *Muslim identity and the Balkan State*, eds. Hugh Poulton and Suha Taji-Farouki (London: Hurst&Company, 1997), 139-44.

within the new Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY). In doing so, the Yugoslav Communist leadership was pursuing several goals. First, and probably the most important goal, was its desire to consolidate its power by securing the sympathy of the Serbian population. By exploiting the issue of Kosovo, the Communists were able to promulgate the tenets of Marxism-Leninism even among the supporters of the idea of a Greater Serbia. Second, Kosovo was strategically important to the newly established state because of its geographical location. Situated between Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia with natural barriers of mountain ridges on its borders, the region virtually separated the federal units from each other.

Moreover, during that time, extensive preparations were made to establish the Balkan Federation, which would include Albania and Bulgaria under Yugoslav tutelage. This was possible because Yugoslavia emerged from World War II as the strongest Balkan state and Tito's Communist regime enjoyed substantial support from Moscow. Tito could play the Kosovo card during negotiations with Enver Hoxha and make the idea of a Balkan Federation more attractive within Albania. In addition, the problem of Kosovo, otherwise often referred to as the Albanian question, would be solved within the framework of a wider Balkan Federation. Yugoslavia and Albania started to plan the unification of their Armed Forces and signed an economic agreement. The Albanian language was given equal status with Serbo-Croatian and thousands of specialists were sent to Kosovo and Tirana in accordance with the exchange program. At the Plenum of the Albanian Communist Party in December 1946, Enver Hoxha asked rhetorically:

Is it in our interests to ask for Kosovo? That is not a progressive thing to do. No, in this situation, on the contrary, we must do whatever is possible to ensure that the Kosovars become brothers with Yugoslavs.⁶⁸

On the other hand, the incorporation of Kosovo into Serbia met with fierce opposition from local Albanians. Since the Kosovo's regional Communist Party was predominately Serbian, immediately after the war, Albanians constituted only 0.16% of the Communist Party members⁶⁹, and Communist promises about giving the Albanians the right for self-determination were not delivered, and the Albanians did not see the

⁶⁸ Malcolm, 318.

⁶⁹ Vickers, XIV.

difference between the old Yugoslavia and new regime. By the end of 1944 and the beginning of 1945, the advancing units of the National Liberation Army encountered armed resistance from the Kosovo Albanians. The communist leadership, having under its authority 800,000 experienced fighters,⁷⁰ responded with harsh measures, and in February 1945, declared martial law in the region. According to Albanian sources, as many as 47,000 Albanians⁷¹ were the victims of systematic mass executions conducted by Communists during the 1944-46 uprising and following the “disarming” and “search and destroy missions”.

According to the Yugoslav Constitution of 1946, created on a blueprint of Stalin’s Soviet Constitution of 1936, the new socialist state was defined as a federal state consisting of six sovereign republics.⁷² Even though one of the main principles embedded in the Constitution was equality of all nationalities and minority groups, the administrative boundaries of the republics were drawn in accordance with which ethnic group constituted a majority of the population. This ethnic group was considered as a tutelage nation for a republic. Furthermore, Yugoslavia’s peoples were divided into two categories: “the hosts and historical guests”. “The hosts or nations are Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians and Montenegrins. The guests are called ‘national minorities,’ and they include all other groups.”⁷³ The “other groups” traditionally include Albanians, Ashkali, Bosniaks, Hungarians, Roma, Turks and other smaller ethnic groups. In fact, the framework of the first post World War II Yugoslav Constitution put Albanians in a paradoxical situation. Being a majority population in Kosovo, Albanians were considered only as a national minority. In addition, although the Autonomous Region of Kosovo and Metohija had its representatives in a chamber of the federal legislature, all internal affairs were within the jurisdiction of the Republic of Serbia. Therefore, the local administration was denied any independent decision-making authority. The non-resolution of the Albanian question in Kosovo with the Constitution of 1946 added bitterness to the Albanian’s feelings toward the state.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 144.

⁷¹ Ibid., 148.

⁷² The Republics of Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia including the autonomous province Vojvodina and autonomous region of Kosovo and Metohija.

⁷³ Mertus, 288.

The split between Yugoslavia and Albania that followed the rift between Tito and Stalin in 1948 only aggravated the situation in Kosovo. Yugoslav Communists saw Albania as a bastion of Stalinism and a springboard for a possible Soviet invasion. Ideological differences and contradicting positions occupied by the two states directly impacted the Albanian population in Kosovo. The Yugoslav leadership feared that propaganda from Tirana might have an appeal amongst Kosovo Albanians as well as the fact that the memories of atrocities committed by Partisan units during the suppression of the Albanian revolt of 1944-46 were still fresh in their minds. Since Albanians continued to treat new authorities with open hostility and were “the most hostile element”⁷⁴, they were under constant oppression from the Yugoslavian State Security Service, the UDB⁷⁵. Thousands of Albanians were arrested and incriminated on different offences, including nationalism, irredentism and espionage. In addition, the border between Yugoslavia and Albania remained relatively open until 1948 and the alleged reason that *Sigurimi*⁷⁶ agents might have penetrated deep into Albanian society in Kosovo only served to tighten security measures.

“During the period from 1948 to 1966, border clashes break out along the Kosovo-Albanian border.”⁷⁷ The UDB under the leadership of a “strong man of Serbia” Aleksander Rankovic, who was a vice-president of Yugoslavia and a Serb by nationality, “heightened persecution of the Albanian population in Kosovo”⁷⁸. The extensive surveillance and harassment both by the police and UDB of Albanians persisted well until the removal of Rankovic from his position in 1966. The Albanian population was encouraged to emigrate to Turkey and a new Yugoslav-Turkish agreement was signed by 1953. “Since the UDB officers in Kosovo were, according to statistics for 1956, 58 percent Serb, 28 percent Montenegrin and only 13 percent Albanian, their operations could only add to the increasingly bitter sense of ethnic polarization in the province.”⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Vickers, 148.

⁷⁵ UDB is an acronym for Uprava Drzavne Bezbednosti can be translated as Department of State Security from Serb-Croat language, was reorganized and renamed to SDB (State Security Service) with removal from power its former chief Alexander Rankovic.

⁷⁶ *Sigurimi* is the name of State Security Service in Enver’s Hoxha Albania.

⁷⁷ Mertus, 289.

⁷⁸ Ibidem.

⁷⁹ Malcolm, 321.

However, the initial polarization immediately after the war rose from a provisional decree that banned the return of Serbian colonists to the province. At the same time, the Yugoslav government allowed approximately 25,000 Albanians to come to Kosovo as a gesture of a good will and “to correct previous injustice to the Albanians”⁸⁰. In addition, the Yugoslav government allowed the immigration of 5,000 Albanians⁸¹ to the region who were seeking refuge from the Hoxha purges of alleged Titoists within the ranks of the Albanian Communist party. These decisions made by Tito were highly unpopular amongst the Serbs and was considered to be pro-Albanian.

There are numerous accusations that the Yugoslav government ruled Kosovo in a manner similar to that of prewar authorities and treated Kosovo as a colony. Therefore, some speculations, particularly popular among proponents of the Albanian cause, are keen to explain the high percentage of Serbs and Montenegrins in the state security apparatus as an attempt to exercise revenge on Albanians for their collaborationism with the occupying forces during the war and predominance of Slavs in the state administration as proof of the colonial status of Kosovo. “Although this was essentially just the expression of an antidemocratic order, the Albanian population perceived it as primarily the product of a Serbian regime.”⁸² Additionally, these explanations could not withstand the critics because a majority of Partisan ranks that served as basis for both the Yugoslav Peoples Army (JNA) and UDB were recruited at the major theaters of fighting during World War II such as Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro.

Partisan (as well as Chetnik) leaders were recruited mainly from among pre-war Army officers. Throughout most of 1942, the Partisans fielded two Montenegrins and four Serbian battalions, leavened with just a few fighters of other nationalities.⁸³

Albanians could not constitute a bureaucracy in the administration at the local level simply because of the absence of trained specialists and a lack of intelligentsia.

⁸⁰ Vickers, 145.

⁸¹ Ibid., 151.

⁸² Dejan Guzina, “Kosovo or Kosova - Could It Be Both? The Case of Interlocking Serbian and Albanian Nationalisms,” in *Understanding the War in Kosovo*, eds. Florian Bieber and Zidas Dakalovski, (Frank Cass, 2003), 31-52.

⁸³ Anton Bebler, “Political Pluralism and the Yugoslav Professional Military,” in *The Tragedy of Yugoslavia: The Failure of Democratic Transformation*, eds. Jim Seroka and Vukasin Pavlovic, (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1992), 105-40.

Following World War II, “Albanian ‘intellectuals’ were merely hastily trained primary and secondary school teachers”⁸⁴. According to the Yugoslav census conducted in 1948, 73 percent of the 750,483 Albanians in Yugoslavia⁸⁵ were illiterate. “The few who could read and write did so in the Cyrillic alphabet and knew nothing about their own alphabet.”⁸⁶ Albanian society continued to be relatively conservative and was organized in a clan or large family system, also known as “*zadruga*”, which was significantly influenced by the tenets of Islam and customary law. Women were separated from men and forced to wear veils. The tradition of blood feuds continued to be widely disseminated virtually locking thousands of Albanian men in their houses. As some observers estimated in the late 1980’s, up to 17,000 Kosovo Albanian men⁸⁷ were threatened with death because of blood feuds. “This patriarchal way of life was still the norm in many Albanian villages well into the 1990s.”⁸⁸ These also led to the isolation of the Kosovo Albanians and limited their integration in Yugoslav society.

On top of all the social and political problems, the Kosovo economic situation was especially difficult. Even though the region’s main product before the war was agriculture and the only industrial complex was Trepca mines and smelter, as a result of the war, “more than 70 percent of the region’s meager industry was destroyed and not a single kilometer of road was asphalted”⁸⁹. Therefore, by incorporating Kosovo into Yugoslavia, the Communist government encountered the immense task of modernizing and developing the region in political, social and economic spheres.

C. MODERNIZATION OF KOSOVO: THE POLITICAL, ECONOMICAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE AUTONOMY

As part of the modernization process of the Albanian society, the state promoted a campaign to erase illiteracy. One hundred fifty seven schools⁹⁰ for Albanian children were opened in Kosovo between 1945 and 1950 and courses for illiterate adults were

⁸⁴ Vickers, XIV.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 152.

⁸⁶ Ibidem.

⁸⁷ Ken Simons, “Civil Society and the Kosovo Crisis, 1981-1999,” in *The Lessons of Yugoslavia*, ed. Metta Spencer (Elsevier Science Inc, 2000), 309-19.

⁸⁸ Vickers, 111.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 152.

⁹⁰ Vickers, 152.

offered. By 1950, Kosovo had 258 cultural and educational societies⁹¹ aimed at developing Albanian national culture in Yugoslavia. In addition, the government undertook an immense task to rebuild the infrastructure and began a program of industrialization. However, because of the rift in relations between Yugoslavia and Albania, the territory of Kosovo was considered too vulnerable to outside attack. Therefore, the main investments were injected into the extractive industry. During the post-war period, several artificial lakes, including Gazivoda near Mitrovica, Batlava near Podujevo, and Gračanica near Pristina, were created to fulfill the water needs of towns, arable lands, and electric plants in Obilić near Prishtina.

The Yugoslav Constitution implemented in 1953 was radically different from the previous one because it completely diverged from the Soviet constitutional model. This constitution defined Yugoslavia “as a community of people whose ‘socialist consciousness’ supersedes national consciousness”.⁹² In addition, the Yugoslav brand of Communism also diverged from the Soviet economic model because it was based on self-management. In order to promote the Yugoslavian type of Communism, which was different from any other in Eastern Europe because it was self-made and not created by an outside power, and to minimize any potential for the rebirth of ethnic nationalism, the Yugoslav leadership placed the entire blame for atrocities committed during the war exclusively on Axis powers. New myths were created under the famous slogan of “Bratstvo i Jedinstvo”⁹³ in order to promote patriotic feelings and to consolidate the population’s loyalty to the state. The input of all nations and nationalities in a common victory was considered equally valuable. The public discussions about ethnically based conflicts and injustices made by Yugoslav peoples toward each other during World War II became virtually forbidden. “The citizens of the ‘new’ Yugoslavia [...] were encouraged to think about themselves as Yugoslavs, rather than members of this or that national, ethnic, or religious group.”⁹⁴

⁹¹ Ibid., 153.

⁹² Mertus, 289.

⁹³ The slogan “Bratstvo i Jedinstvo” could be translated from Serbo-Croatian to the English language as the “Brotherhood and Unity.”

⁹⁴ John D. Treadway, “Of Shatter Belts and Powder Kegs: A Brief Survey of Yugoslav History,” in *Crises in the Balkans*, ed. Constantine P. Danopoulos and Kostas G. Messas (Westview Press, 1997), 19-45.

The 1960's were marked by two important events that significantly impacted the development of Kosovo. By 1963, the new Yugoslav and Serbian constitutions were adopted. Since the "Regional Council" of Kosovo at which Metohija was changed into a "Provincial Assembly", the status of Kosovo was upgraded to that of Vojvodina. Nevertheless, according to the Yugoslav Constitution, republics were considered essential components of the Federation. Therefore, Serbia's political control over its autonomies was strengthened. "From constituent elements of the Federation constitutionally recognized, they became 'socio-political' communities within the Republic [of Serbia]' (Article 112) or 'juridical creations' of the Republican constitution."⁹⁵ Thus, real autonomy for Kosovo was reduced even further.

In 1966, Aleksander Rankovic was retired from his position as a result of an inter-party quarrel regarding the design of the Federation and competition over power within the party. Being a committed proponent of centralism, he lost his fight against those, including Tito, who saw the solution to Yugoslavia's burgeoning national problem in the further decentralization of the state and giving more economic and decision-making powers to the federative units. Tito used the rift within the Party and the ousting of Rankovic to consolidate his personal power. The UDB was purged from cadres loyal to Rankovic and the overall role of the State Security apparatus was reduced. Moreover, the entire blame for the discriminatory and repressive state's policy toward Kosovo Albanians was placed exclusively on the UDB. "The Sixth Plenum of the Serbian Party Central Committee issue[d] a condemnation of 'certain sections of the State Security apparatus for discriminatory and illegal practices entirely contrary to the League of Communists of Yugoslavia's program and the Yugoslav Constitution.'"⁹⁶

The measures adopted during the Plenum to "eliminate the consequences of the earlier deformations and create new conditions for the many-faceted affirmation of Albanian nationality"⁹⁷ signaled to Kosovo Albanians that Serb domination in Kosovo's administration, the Party's regional organization and security apparatus had come to an end. "As result of the severe criticism of the police role in Kosovo, an emigrant from

⁹⁵ Vickers, 161.

⁹⁶ Mertus, 290.

⁹⁷ Vickers, 162.

Albania was appointed chief of police in Kosovo.”⁹⁸ Albanians gradually began to replace Serbs in important positions within the bureaucracy and the Party hierarchy at the local level. Although some elements within the emerging Albanian elite pressed for more rights and greater autonomy for the Province up until the creation of the Albanian Republic, only some concessions were made by Tito as part of the liberalization process.

The Province was allowed to promulgate its own laws that would not confront the federal and Serbian constitutions. Kosovo was allowed to have its representatives in the federal government separate from the Serb delegation. The name Metohija was omitted from the official name of the Province because of its Serb-Orthodox connotation and Albanians gained the right to freely fly their flag, which was identical to the flag of the state of Albania. The two last events were only symbolically important but they demonstrated that the balance of power within the Province started to shift in favor of the Albanians.

In 1969, the bilingual University of Pristina opened. Until this moment, Kosovo Albanians had access to Albanian language instructions only in primary and secondary schools. Due to the normalization in relationships between Yugoslavia and Albania, both were threatened by the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and the shortage of scholarly literature in the Albanian language, 237 university professors⁹⁹ from Albania were invited to teach in Pristina. “Over 20 percent of all books (particularly in the humanities) were imported from Hoxha’s Albania.”¹⁰⁰ “Given Albania’s different ideological bent, these texts necessarily included ideological and philosophical undercurrents contrary to those produced in Yugoslavia.”¹⁰¹ In addition to the university, institutes of Albanian literature and culture were opened. With the removal of police pressure and unprecedented progress in education and the development of culture and sciences, Kosovo Albanians became more aware of their rights and distinctive culture. “The floodgates were now opened to a powerful revival of Albanian nationalism.”¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Mertus, 162.

⁹⁹ Lazar Nikolic, “Ethnic Prejudices and Discrimination: The Case of Kosovo,” in *Understanding the War in Kosovo*, eds. Florian Bieber and Zidas Dakalovski, (Frank Cass, 2003), 53-76.

¹⁰⁰ Ibidem.

¹⁰¹ Mertus, 28.

¹⁰² Vickers, 165.

In 1974, the new Yugoslav Constitution was promulgated to ease the consequences of the outburst of Croatian nationalism that was ruthlessly suppressed by the central authorities. Kosovo was granted the highest degree of autonomy and became almost equal to the other republics in Yugoslavia. Although Kosovo continued to bear the title of an Autonomous Province, it had all the institutions of a republican status, such as a central bank, supreme court, a separate police force and its own assembly. The educational and judicial systems, as well as healthcare, were placed under then auspices of the Province. Kosovo was represented in the Federal Chamber of the Yugoslav Assembly along with seven other federal units. In addition, Kosovo was authorized to adopt its own Constitution. The 1974 Constitution forbade the Republic of Serbia to intervene in Kosovo's provincial affairs against the will of its assembly. Nevertheless, the Province was denied the right to secede from the federation and Albanians were defined as a nationality but not as a nation, and therefore, were not entitled to form a republic. Approximately, at the same time, the pejorative Serbian term "*Siptari*" for Albanians deriving from "*Shqiptar*" (the name used by Albanians), was forbidden. Since the term Albanians was used in the language of the Constitution, it came into popular usage. Even though local power was mostly under the control of the Albanian members of the CPY, ordinary Albanians considered these party members to be Serbian collaborators.

The development of autonomy in the 1960's and 1970's did not completely satisfy Kosovo Albanians despite tremendous achievements in economical, cultural and socio-political spheres. "By 1978, electricity and running water was available to all but remote villages, 57 percent of Kosovo's population was urban, average life expectancy had risen to sixty-eight years, 95 percent of all children were receiving elementary schooling, and there was one doctor per 2,009 inhabitants (compare with one per 8,527 in 1952)."¹⁰³ The number of Kosovo Albanians employed in the social sector steadily grew from 58.2 percent in 1974 to 83 percent in 1978 and to 92 percent in 1980¹⁰⁴. "By 1981,

¹⁰³ Robert Bideleux, "Kosovo's Conflict," *History Today* 48, no 11 (November 1998): 30.

¹⁰⁴ Roger D. Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*, (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 220.

Albanians made up approximately two-thirds of the League of Communists in Kosovo and three-fourth of the police.”¹⁰⁵ That same year, a Kosovo Albanian, Fadil Hoxha, was elected Vice-President of the State Presidency, and effectively became Tito’s deputy.

By the beginning of the 1970’s, the Albanian cultural and historical heritage in the form of printed books, radio and TV broadcasts started to become more and more observable in Kosovo. The Pristina Radio and Television Center (RTV) “broadcast for ten hours a day in the Albanian language and the two RTV radio channels broadcast altogether for thirty-four hours a day”.¹⁰⁶ “Albanian intellectuals were eager to discover their history and culture, and as a result, played a vital part in encouraging Albanians to rediscover their national identity by studying their history, literature and traditions at the new Albanology faculty of Pristina University.”¹⁰⁷ Numerous Albanian students received an opportunity to study abroad including at theology faculties in the Muslim Arab World. For instance, Ibrahim Rugova, the current President of Kosovo, studied literature in France, Hashim Taci, the head of the Democratic Party of Kosovo, and former political leader of the Kosovo Liberation Army (the KLA), studied political sciences in Switzerland. These also had unexpected results. As they became emancipated, Albanians came to realize that they constitute a nation that was divided not only within the federation between Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro but also between Yugoslavia and Albania. Thus, Kosovo Albanians became less loyal to the Yugoslav Federation and claims that the Province should be granted the status of a republic started to appear more often.

Another reason for the significant increase in the Albanian’s discontent was massive unemployment in the Province, “which rose from 18.5 percent in 1971 to 27.5 percent ten years later”¹⁰⁸, and was the highest in Yugoslavia. “Only one person out of ten was wage-earner.”¹⁰⁹ Discrepancies between the rate in population and employment

¹⁰⁵ Petersen, 221.

¹⁰⁶ Vickers, 217

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 182.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 189.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 196.

only exacerbated the high tensions between Serbs and Albanians. The Serbs continued to occupy many of the managerial positions in professions, not to mention their overwhelming majority in the SDB and the Armed Forces.

“Kosovo’s Albanians had the highest natural population growth-rate in Europe: 26.1 per 1,000 in 1979 compared with 8.6 for the Yugoslav national average.”¹¹⁰ Therefore, youths constituted the majority of the population in the region. A large number of youths was involved in the higher education system, which was the way to keep them off the streets and to hide the high rate of unemployment among them. “Kosovo’s ratio of students was the highest in the country: 274.7 per 1,000 inhabitants, compared with the Yugoslav national average was 194.9.”¹¹¹ “Pristina University specialized almost exclusively in Albanian history, literature and arts, while training in modern technical disciplines was neglected.”¹¹² In addition, a large number of Albanian speaking students gravitated to non-technical sciences. For instance, a young specialist with a degree in Albanology or simply having degree in Albanian language had a slim chance of obtaining a job in the Province or in the rest of the country.

Kosovo was trapped in poverty because it served as a source of raw materials for the country’s industrial complex, while the industrial sector in the Province was largely underdeveloped. The constant failure in economic development promoted the creation of popular opinion amongst Albanians that had they managed the economy on their own, they might have achieved greater success. The gap between the more developed federal units and the less developed was growing increasingly during the post World War II period. In 1947, the level of development of the more developed parts of Yugoslavia was twice as high as that in Kosovo. In 1980, the level of economic development for Yugoslavia as a whole, including far from being as prosperous as Macedonia and Montenegro, was four times Kosovo’s.¹¹³ By 1985, the investment rate in Kosovo was the highest in Yugoslavia and had reached 39.56 percent out of the total distribution of the Federal Credit Fund, according to the program of development of the underdeveloped

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 173.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 195.

¹¹² Guzina, 34.

¹¹³ Mertus, 25.

areas. By 1990, this ratio reached 53.26 percent¹¹⁴. However, heavy investments had little impact on the quality of the ordinary people's life in the region and created discontent among the population in other parts of the country, particularly in Slovenia and Serbia. Instead of being directed to increasing the labor market, funds were allocated to prestigious projects, such as the building of the *Boro i Ramiz* sport complex, monuments dedicated to World War II heroes, and a modern library in Pristina.

The poor performance of the economy was exacerbated by the migration of highly qualified specialists, mainly Serbs, from the province to Serbia proper. Serbs complained that specialists were forced to leave by "discriminatory policies of Kosovo Albanians. Albanians contend that the emigration resulted from the loss of privileges they had enjoyed and their reluctance to accept the equality of the Albanians."¹¹⁵ Kosovo Albanians blamed the federal government for the economic failure while the Serbs accused incompetent Albanian bureaucrats at the provincial level of governance. Frustration amongst Serbs and Albanians steadily grew with time and took different forms of outrage including violent mass demonstrations and open accusations of each other for creating the problems.

D. ALBANIAN MOVEMENT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS: FROM SUBVERSION TO PARALLEL STATE STRUCTURES

Certainly during Tito's rule, Yugoslavia became one of the most open Communist countries with its population enjoying considerable liberties unimagined in any other part of the Soviet block. However, it remained a Communist state based on Marxism-Leninism ideology intolerant of any manifestation of discontent to the regime's political order and to its social, cultural and nationality policies. Due to strong pressure exerted by the State Security apparatus from 1946 and onward, the Albanian national movement was ill organized and contained to the underground, and for that reason, could not gain strong popular support. In the period of the 1960's-1980's, various political organizations of Kosovo Albanians were created first under the auspices of the Revolutionary Committee for the Liberation of Albanians than under the Kosovo National Movement. "Although these groups may have claimed left-wing, Marxist-Leninist ideology, their ideology was

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 23.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 27.

based more on Albanian nationalism, and their goal was republic status for Kosovo and/or unification with Albania.”¹¹⁶ A majority of these groups were illegal and involved in clandestine activities including the “distributing of leaflets calling on Albanians to take part in boycotts and strikes, of writing ‘subversive slogans’ (such as ‘Kosovo Republic’) and of distributing ‘subversive literature’ (originating in Albanian or Albanian émigré circles)”¹¹⁷. “Investigation into their activities revealed eight additional secessionists groups that employed or were planning to employ terrorism to drive non-Albanians from Kosovo.”¹¹⁸

In March 1981, Albanian students of the University of Pristina began to demonstrate because they were dissatisfied with the poor quality of food in the University’s cafeteria and demanded an improvement in living conditions in university dormitories. They also demanded “better conditions for Albanians in Kosovo” and even called “for Kosovo to become a Republic within Yugoslavia”¹¹⁹. The police easily dispersed the student riots using batons and tear gas. However, in less than two weeks, Kosovo was engulfed in mass riots of Kosovo Albanians. “[T]he student demonstrators were joined by factory workers, farmers and, as was later disclosed, several members of the League of Communists of Kosovo and Albanian members of the army and police.”¹²⁰ The demonstrators protested under the slogans of “Kosovo Republic,” “Protect the Rights of Albanians Outside Kosovo,” “Stop Repression, Free Political Prisoners,” “Down with the Great-Serbia Chauvinism.”¹²¹ Some slogans had a pro-Albanian and anti-Yugoslav stance, such as: “We Are Enver Hoxha’s Soldiers,” “Down with Revisionism, Long Live Marxism-Leninism,” “We Are Albanians, Not Yugoslavs,” and “We Want United Albania!”¹²²

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 43.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 44.

¹¹⁸ Nikolic, 63.

¹¹⁹ Mertus, 30.

¹²⁰ Vickers, 198.

¹²¹ Mertus, 30.

¹²² Ibidem.

Eventually, riots turned violent because of the large numbers of Albanian youth involved in disturbances. According to Sami Repishti, an author of “Human Rights and the Albanian Nationality”, “these activities included defacing government buildings, desecrating communist monuments and Serbian cemeteries, writing slogans on walls, throwing stones at passing trains and government cars, and especially distributing antigovernment material”¹²³. The turmoil caught both federal government and Kosovo Albanian leadership by surprise. In 1995, Mahmud Bakali, the former head of the League of Communists of Kosovo, said: “The demonstrations were our handicap. They were not needed at that time”¹²⁴. “Azem Vlasi, an Albanian politician who would appear close to Milosevic until 1989, would agree, ‘We weren’t ready. The 1981 demonstrations did more harm than good.’”¹²⁵

The federal government responded to the riots by declaring a state of emergency and undertook harsh measures to quell the disturbances. The special units of the JNA and police were deployed throughout the Province, a curfew was imposed, and several waves of arrests were conducted. Excessive force used by the military and police left “8 demonstrators dead and another 75 wounded; 55 of these sustained injuries from firearms”¹²⁶. “Up to 30,000 troops patrolled the Province, which the Albanian population viewed as a military occupation.”¹²⁷ Furthermore, the riots provided the federal government the pretext to heighten security measures in the Province. As a result, Kosovo Albanians became subject to police discriminatory arrests and detentions for years to come.

In 1988, Rahman Morina, Kosovo’s minister of interior, presented to the Kosovo parliament a report that stated that in the period between 1981 and 1989 the police and courts had dealt with almost 600,000 people (nearly a third of Kosov’s entire population) as a part of the struggle against Albanian nationalism. Of this number, 22,000 were sentenced to between 2 and 14 years’ imprisonment under Articles 114 and 133 of the Crime

¹²³ Ibid., 41.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 46.

¹²⁵ Ibidem.

¹²⁶ Duska Anastasijevic, “The Closing of the Kosovo Circle: Victimization Versus Responsibility,” in *Kosovo and the Challenge of Humanitarian Intervention*, eds. Albrecht Scanabel and Ramesh Thakur, (United Nations University Press, 2000), 44-63.

¹²⁷ Vickers, 198.

Code, which pertained to crimes of opinion. The charges were prosecuted with cooperation of the Kosovo Albanian communist establishment... They were supported in this by a predominantly Albanian local police force.¹²⁸

By the end of 1980's, the communist regime in Yugoslavia had failed to deliver its promises of the creation of a prosperous socialist society with equality for all nations and nationalities. Widespread popular discontent over poor economical performance, decreasing living standards, growing tensions between the federal government in Belgrade, and the inability to govern the federation and republican authorities efficiently, led the latter to initiate political and social changes at the local level. The strategies of the political leadership in each of the Yugoslav republics were largely influenced by specific elements of the national question. The conservative elites in Serbia, headed by Slobodan Milosevic, pressed for the unification of Serbia through a considerable reduction of autonomy of its Provinces and the concentration of the legislative, executive and judicial powers under the authority of the Socialist Republic of Serbia.

“The first step towards legal unification of Serbia was the adaptation of the Programme for the Attainment of Peace, Freedom, Equality and Prosperity in Kosovo by the still socialist Serbian Assembly (March 1990).”¹²⁹ The Programme announced “specific measures for preserving law and order, peace, freedom, equality and Serbia’s integrity”¹³⁰. In addition, the Serbian legislature passed the Law on Actions of the Republican Administration in Exceptional Circumstances, which effectively extended the emergency measures in Kosovo. “Using this law as a legal shield, the Serbian government replaced the entire ruling Albanian political and managerial elite with Kosovo Serbs.”¹³¹ The Albanian workers were required to sign letters of loyalty declaring their allegiance to the Republic of Serbia. If they refused, they would be expelled from their jobs. As a result, more than 100,000 Albanians¹³² were dismissed from their positions. The school’s curricula were adjusted to those of the rest of the

¹²⁸ Anastasijevic, 47.

¹²⁹ Guzina, 38.

¹³⁰ Vickers, 243.

¹³¹ Guzina, 38.

¹³² Ibidem.

republic. All aspects of the educational system specific to the province were revoked. Albanians refused to adopt a new or “Serbinized” curricula, and because education was paid by the government, the Serbian authorities simply stop funding to Albanian schools. In addition, the Kosovo Academy of Science and Arts, the Kosovo Institute of History and faculty of Albanology, were closed down. “500,000 pupils and university students of Albanian nationality were thrown out of the educational system.”¹³³ Eighteen thousand teaching and non-teaching staff¹³⁴ were dismissed by the authorities under different pretexts.

In response to Serbia’s growing involvement in Kosovo internal affairs, the Albanian members of the Kosovo Assembly proclaimed the sovereign Republic of Kosova within the Yugoslav federation and its secession from Serbia. In September, they held a secret meeting to adopt the so-called Kacanik Constitution of the Republic of Kosova. Therefore, the foundation for the creation of parallel state structures was laid. The actions taken by the Kosovo Albanians were considered illegal by the Serbian authorities. Serbia dissolved Kosovo’s government and established direct rule over the Province from Belgrade. Legislative power was delegated to Serbia’s National Assembly; executive and administrative power to the Government of Serbia and judicial power went under the control of the Supreme Court of Serbia. Thus, the Province was effectively stripped of its autonomy. The final status of Kosovo was defined as a region with territorial autonomy within the Serbian Republic by the new Serbian constitution adopted on 28 September 1990. The province was also given its original name of Kosovo and Metohija.

In September 1991, Kosovo Albanians held a clandestine referendum at which “99.87 percent were in favor of independence”¹³⁵. In December, the Kosovo Albanian leadership applied for recognition as an independent state to the European Community, but the request was rejected. In May 1992, the Kosovo Albanians held parliamentary and presidential elections. Although the elections were deemed illegal by the Serbian

¹³³ Mihailovic, 292.

¹³⁴ Guzina, 39.

¹³⁵ Vickers, 251.

authorities, they did nothing to prevent it. Ibrahim Rugova, a leader of the Democratic Alliance of Kosovo (LDK), was elected president by more than 95 percent of the votes and his party won 99.5 percent of the votes¹³⁶.

Although the ultimate goal of the Albanians was the independence of Kosovo, under the leadership of the LDK, they adopted a stance of passive resistance to Belgrade's rule. While insisting on peaceful resistance, the Albanians denied the legitimacy of Yugoslav/Serbian state institutions and refused to compromise with the central authority. The civil disobedience of the Albanians took different forms. They boycotted any elections held in Serbia, refused Serbian administration in the Province, stop paying taxes and even did not pay for utilities including garbage collection. "A sort of inverted apartheid had developed in which oppressed, rather than 'master' refused to cooperate with the other side."¹³⁷ In the period from 1992 to 1996, a parallel state structure with a functioning presidency, government, legislature and educational and healthcare systems were established. For the first time, the Albanian movement under the leadership of Ibrahim Rugova, assumed an organized form and employed civilized means of political struggle. Even though it restrained itself from the violence peculiar to the 1980's and helped to keep the fragile peaceful co-existence in the Province well into the mid-1990's, the Albanian tactics had several major shortfalls.

At the domestic level, the establishment of a parallel administration eventually led to deeper segregation and strengthened mistrust between the two communities. The Serbs controlled the Kosovo administration and state enterprises while the Albanians managed their own society and private sector. Both peoples had their own schools, shops and medical facilities. Although "[t]hroughout the Yugoslav period, the two ethnic groups lived separate communal existence and there was almost no intermarriage or other significant intercommunal integration"¹³⁸, with the establishment of parallel state structures, practically all interactions between the two communities came to a halt. In addition, the central government, consumed with the conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia,

¹³⁶ Mertus, 301.

¹³⁷ Guzina, 43.

¹³⁸ Roland Dannreuther, "War in Kosovo: History, Development and Aftermath," in *Kosovo: Perceptions of War and Its Aftermath*, eds. Mary Buckley and Sally N. Cummings, (Continuum, 2001), 12-29.

simply ignored the Albanian “phantom state” as long as peace and a sort of stability were maintained. “By the renouncing democratic means of political struggle, they [the Albanians] were left with options reflecting a strong communitarian bias, promoting collective Albanian rights instead of the individual rights of all Kosovars, irrespective of their ethnic background.”¹³⁹

At the international level, the Albanians could gain only symbolic support and sympathy from western powers. In fact, the international community by and large ignored the plight of Kosovo Albanians for the reason that its attention was mostly concerned by the situation in Croatia and Bosnia. The main efforts were put into stopping the fighting and facilitating the peace process. As a result, the question of Kosovo was not on the agenda at the Dayton peace conference. These, in turn, led to the radicalization of some segments within the Kosovo Albanian society despite the fact that Rugova continued to insist on non-violent tactics, because according to his beliefs, and examples from Bosnia:

The Serbs only wait for a pretext to attack the Albanian population and wipe it out. We believe that it is better to do nothing and stay alive than be massacred¹⁴⁰.

The small results produced by the pacifist tactics made the emergence of such radical groups as the KLA possible. In addition, the turmoil in Albania that led to the collapse of the government in 1997, made the influx of a large amount of weapons and ammunition into Kosovo possible as well. With the stalemate in the political process and “with 12 Kalashnikov rifles available for a pair of Nike sneakers”¹⁴¹, the highly probable outburst of violence became unavoidable.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 42.

¹⁴⁰ The Kosovo Report (Oxford University Press, 2000), 43,

¹⁴¹ Jonathan Clarke, “Kosovo Tempts the Meddlesome to Incite Another Ethnic War,” *The Los Angeles Times*, January 7, 1998, Part B; p. 7.

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IV. ON THE WAY TO AN “INEVITABLE” WAR

Samo sloga Srbina spasava (Solely solidarity saves the Serbs)¹⁴²

A. “YOU USED TO WARM US LIKE THE SUN”¹⁴³

From the end of World War II and onward, Yugoslavia as a federative state, was held together by the Communist Party and authoritarian rule of its charismatic leader Josip Broz Tito until his death in 1980. For many years, Yugoslavia successfully functioned as a non nation-state by providing a peaceful compromise to the conflicting and complicated “national questions” posed by its constitutive nations and various nationalities. Ever since the foundation of Yugoslavia, whether it was a royalist dictatorship during the interwar period or a Communist authoritarian regime after World War II, two contradictory forces significantly impacted the shaping of the country’s political arrangement, which was namely Croatian, Slovene and Albanian separatism striving for their own independent states, and Serbian centralism eager to preserve a common state under its authority. Furthermore, Yugoslavia could not become a nation-state because the Serbs, the largest ethnic group distributed unevenly throughout the country, constituted only 40% of the total population. Post World War II Yugoslavia became rather a conglomerate of federative units that were, in fact, nation-states.

Despite its internationalist rhetoric, Tito’s communism was deeply nationalistic aiming at creating an overarching Yugoslavian consciousness. Employing “the classic Soviet formula, ‘national in form, socialist in content’”¹⁴⁴ the communist regime was, in effect, a populist movement justified in terms of the unity of the nation. While balancing the various Yugoslav nations against each other to ensure that no national group would dominate others, Tito legitimized the communist regime in Yugoslavia through nationalism.

¹⁴² According to the popular belief widely disseminated amongst the Serbs, this saying originated during the famous battle at Kosovo Polje in 1389 when the Serbian army was defeated by the Ottoman Turks due to the disarray among the Serbian princes and because of a betrayal by one of the nobles. At the beginning of the 1990’s this saying was adopted as a slogan by various Serbian nationalists. After the disintegration of the SFRY in 1992, the quadruple of “S” written in Cyrillic appeared in the official symbols of Yugoslavia.

¹⁴³ Tim Judah, *The Serbs. History, Myth and the Destruction of Yugoslavia* (Yale Nota Bene, 2000), 135.

¹⁴⁴ Vesna Pesic, “Serbian Nationalism and the Origins of the Yugoslav Crisis,” [http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/early/pesic/pesic2.html] as accessed on 25 August 2003.

The Yugoslav political arrangement was developed to accommodate the differences amongst its peoples under the leadership of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and Tito in particular. Tito created the system of checks and balances in which any attempt to resolve the national question in favor of a particular ethnic group would upset the Yugoslavia's internal balance of power and ultimately lead to the collapse of the entire state. In doing so, Tito played the role of an indispensable arbiter among the quarrelling Yugoslav peoples. Thus, his personal position of charismatic authority was absolutely invulnerable to any challenge.

However, the regime's efforts to suppress nationalism in order to create Yugoslav consciousness ended in vain. The communist beliefs that ethnic, religious and other primordial loyalties would disappear during a process of modernization of Yugoslav society were premature. "[D]espite the unflagging efforts of central authorities to foster a spirit of Yugoslavism, no more than 10 per cent of the population ever did call itself Yugoslav."¹⁴⁵ The policies and constitutional changes of the federal government led to what they sought to avoid, the rise of ethnic nationalism, the emergence of various secessionist movements and the independence of republics from Yugoslavia. The shortfalls of the Yugoslav system became especially evident after the death of Tito in 1980 in the wider context of the political transformation of Eastern and Central Europe, when nationalistically driven elites became involved in projects for the creation of a "Greater Serbia", "Greater Croatia" and "Greater Albania".

B. ORIGINS OF SERBIAN NATIONALISM

The recent parliamentary elections in Serbia and Montenegro held in December 2003 to the surprise of many European political and diplomatic observers brought unexpected results. The ultranationalist Serbian Radical Party of Vojislav Seselj, who is currently on trial by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague for the atrocities committed during the war in Croatia and Bosnia, won nearly 28% of the votes and some 82 of 250 seats¹⁴⁶. Additionally, the Serbian Socialist Party headed by the former Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, who is also on trial by the ICTY for Crimes Against Humanity, gained 22 seats in the Parliament.

¹⁴⁵ Treadway, 32.

¹⁴⁶ The exact results of the elections are available at [<http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/default.asp?PageId=4695>], as accessed on 10 March 2004.

Even though the number of seats received by the two parties is too small to govern the country, the results of the elections clearly articulate that nationalism still has an appeal amongst the Serbian electorate. Despite the fact that “nationalism is clearly an extremely poor ideology”¹⁴⁷ it still plays a significant role in politics in Serbia and it will probably remain an influential political force for the immediate future until the Serbs fulfill their essential desires for belonging and identity.

The subject of Serbian nationalism has been a primary theme of abundant studies produced by numerous historians and political scientists. Although the majority of research clearly identifies evident connections between the outburst of nationalism in Serbia at the end of the 1980's and the beginning of the 1990's and the escalation of the conflict in Kosovo in 1998-99, Serbian nationalism is nothing new. Ever since the creation of the autonomous Serbian principality within the Ottoman Empire in 1830, nationalism has played a significant role in the formation of the Serbian nation, and consequently, the nation-state. The rise of Serbian nationalism and the progress of the demand for an independent Serbian nation-state were closely bound to the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the rivalry between the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires over influence in the region. The ‘National awakening’ of Serbs, the struggle for political independence, and the creation of a relatively homogeneous nation-state were heroic and inhumanly cruel, including the violent expulsion and ‘cleansing’ of minorities.

A nation is often seen as an abstraction because of the imagination of intellectuals whose ideas were propagated either by the elite or by nationalists to serve their interests. Benedict Anderson defines a nation as “an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign”¹⁴⁸. Ernst Renan in his description goes as far as stating that “a nation is a state of mind, a community that exists as long as it is willed and lives in the hearts and minds of its members”¹⁴⁹.” A nation could consist of thousands,

¹⁴⁷ Alter, Peter, *Nationalism* (Edward Arnold, 1989), 119.

¹⁴⁸ Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 1991), 5.

¹⁴⁹ Schulze, Hagen, *States, Nations and Nationalism* (Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 98.

perhaps millions of members who do not interact with each other, but still because of some commonalities, they associate themselves and their counterparts with their own nation.

The Serbian nation was politically and socially constructed as a cultural nation on the basis of the Orthodox religion, the *Stokavian* dialect of the Serbian language developed by Vuk Karadzic, and on the “historical rights” of Serbs to possess territories that constituted the medieval empire of Stefan Dusan and were lost as a result of the Ottoman conquest. The special role of religion is most evident in Serbia because well up until the 19th century, the Serbs expressed not a national identity, but rather an Orthodox identity that sharply contrasted with the Muslim Ottomans and Albanians, who represented hostile “others”. “Religious self-consciousness gradually transformed into a national self-identification in the nineteenth century Balkans, but religion itself reminded an important determining element of self-identification.”¹⁵⁰ Thus, religious affiliation had a significant input in the formation of the ethnic identity of the Serbs.

Initially, Serbian nationalism as a doctrine has evolved and been used for national awakening by a group of intellectuals aimed at the creation of a Serbian state. Serbian national ideology was expressed by Serbia’s Minister of Internal Affairs Ilija Garasanin. In his *Nacertanije* (1844) that consequently would become a program for Serbian nationalists both in the 19th and 20th centuries, “Garasanin argued that the frontiers of the new Serbian state had to be extended to all areas where Serbs lived and, after Karadzic, these frontiers were linguistic.”¹⁵¹ In the 19th century, the Serbian elite employed nationalism because of its ability to mobilize the nation to reach a common goal, to transcend discrepancies among classes and differences between rural and urban populations, and cemented separated regions of what, as a result, became an independent Serbian state. Nationalism provided legitimacy for the ruling classes’ interests to the rest of the nation and made the Serbs feel special and superior compared to others. It was especially effective when the interests of the ruling elite corresponded with the aspirations of a broad stratum of society.

¹⁵⁰ Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis. Central and Eastern Europe Before World War II* (University of California Press, 1998), 44.

¹⁵¹ Banac, 113.

With the establishment of an independent state in 1878, the new goal of incorporating territories populated by Serbs and Kosovo, in particular, where the Serbs remained subject to Ottoman rule, was established by Serbian authorities. “The emotions generated by the achievement of independence, joined with the general awareness that the Serbian national program was far from completed, created an atmosphere of extreme national enthusiasm in the state.”¹⁵² In a majority of the cases, nationalism could provide a person with political, economical, and social profits, or in most extreme cases, it serves as a protection from the real or imagined threats to the nation posed by the alien “others”. According to the Serbian national ideology, the permanent solution to the Serbian national question would be the creation of a “Greater Serbia.” A unitary state with a highly centralized governance, with a developed economy and strong army, would be able to accomplish the program of unifying the Serbs in one nation-state.

The Serbian leadership cultivated the development of national sentiments through the highly influential Orthodox Church, the educational system and the press. The growing state bureaucracy, state financed schools and regular army have been the basic and most reliable institutions of effective nationalistic propaganda. “As in the other European states, the government through its official institutions worked to strengthen national self-consciousness and to prepare the population to make sacrifices for the sake of territorial expansion.”¹⁵³ The Serbian language, geography and history centered on its heroic past of a Serbian nation were emphasized in the school’s curriculum with the purpose to educate loyal patriotic citizens who would devotedly support the national goals of the Serbian state.

C. THE SERBS WIN THEIR BATTLES AT WAR, BUT LOSE IN PEACE

One of the most important characteristics of Serbian nationalism is a strong belief that, as a result of historic and political events, they were treated unfairly compared to other Yugoslav peoples. The Serbs were portrayed as a people victimized during their quest for a homeland despite their peculiar good virtues when reviewing the history of Yugoslavia by nationalists. Some ultranationalists go as far as defining Serbs as nation exploited by the other Yugoslavs. As a victor in the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and the

¹⁵² Jelavich, Charles, *South Slav Nationalism - Textbooks and Yugoslav Union Before 1914* (Ohio State University Press, 1990), 16.

¹⁵³ Jelavich, 16.

state that fought for the Entente during World War I, Serbia was a leading force in the creation of the first Yugoslavia. At that time, Serbia's main goal was the unification of all Serbs in one centralized state. "Serbia believed that it had the right to speak in the name of all Yugoslav peoples and to influence decisively the form of the state in conformity with Serbian national interests."¹⁵⁴ However, even though the Serbian institution dominated the royalist Yugoslavia, including the ruling Serbian House of Karadjordjevic, politically, the state was organized as a federation.

The Serbs felt aggrieved in Tito's Yugoslavia even though they were the only Balkan allies of the anti-Hitler Coalition, constituted a majority in the Partisan ranks and the Communist Party, and suffered the most casualties during World War II, including those inflicted by the other Yugoslav peoples. As Miranda Vickers points out: "The *raison d'être* of the Yugoslav communists was a carefully set balance of power among the peoples and minorities of Yugoslavia over a potential threat of Serbian predominance."¹⁵⁵ For instance, on the eve of World War II, 161 of 165 Yugoslav generals were Serbs, the Serbs held all 13 positions in the Office of the Premier, 30 of 31 in the Royal Court, 113 of 127 in the Ministry of the Interior, 180 of 219 in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 150 of 156 in the Ministry of Education, and 116 of 137 in the Justice Ministry.¹⁵⁶ Tito's regime sought ways to marginalize Serbian influence by using interwar Yugoslavia as an example in which Serbian domination in high profile positions planted the seeds of discontent among other peoples that eventually led to the dissolution of the state during the war. Moreover, during Communist rule, any manifestation of Serbian discontent with national policies of the LCY would be immediately stigmatized as a demonstration of Greater Serbian chauvinism.

The postwar political arrangement of the state served as an additional basis for Serbian resentment. On the one hand, Serbia was the largest republic in the country both in terms of territory and population. The Serbian capital, Belgrade, was also the capital of federal Yugoslavia. On the other hand, even though the PFRY was governed by a highly centralized and hierarchical LCY, nonetheless, it remained a federative state.

¹⁵⁴ Pesic.

¹⁵⁵ Vickers, 146.

¹⁵⁶ Petersen, 213.

Serbs had the largest diaspora scattered practically throughout all the federative units. The former U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia, Warren Zimmermann, who cannot be accused of being sympathetic to Serbian nationalists, in his memoirs pointed out that Serbs “had a real grievance against Tito, in some measure justified, for creating a postwar Yugoslavia that denied them a role that they believed their large population and historical mission entitled them”¹⁵⁷.

The fact the Serbia was the only one of the country’s republics that had two autonomous areas established on its territory in recognition of the large minorities in Kosovo and Vojvodina, while the Serbian minority in Croatia and Bosnia were denied the same status, added more fuel to Serbian resentment. As previously mentioned in Chapter III, the Constitution of 1974 granted the republics and the autonomous provinces extended powers of self-government. “Power under 1974 Constitution is further decentralized from the federal to the republic level.”¹⁵⁸

Kosovo gained federal status and de facto became a republic in all aspects except for the right of self-determination. The most dramatic changes brought by the constitution to the political arena in the Serbian Socialist Republic was Kosovo’s power to veto Serbian Republic initiatives while Serbia could not veto the initiatives of its autonomy. The Serbian Republic effectively lost control over the Province even though technically it remained a part of its territory. Hence, the Serbs in Kosovo felt discriminated against as a minority and were denied support and protection from Serbia. The Serbs found themselves in the situation that they were divided not only within Yugoslavia, but within Serbia as well. Thus, it created a greater division of the Serbian nation and weakened Serbia’s statehood.

The 1974 Constitution caused ‘positive discrimination’ in favour of the Albanians in Kosovo: bilingualism became a condition for employment; four-fifths of the available posts were reserved for Albanians on a parity basis... Thus begun the virtual Albanianisation of public life in Kosovo.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Warren Zimmermann, “The Last Ambassador: A Memoir of the Collapse of Yugoslavia,” *Foreign Affairs*, no. 74 (1995): 3.

¹⁵⁸ Mertus, 292.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 180.

The communist regime began to promote a significant number of Albanians into positions of political authority. The predominantly Albanian provincial authorities started a policy of Albanization, which was harshly criticized by the local Serb population. “A quota system limited Montenegrins and Serbs - 20,9 per cent of the province’s population in 1971 - to 20 per cent of the jobs.”¹⁶⁰ That means that regardless of the applicant’s qualifications and abilities, a Serb could occupy only one out of five jobs in the public sector. The same discriminatory principle was applied at Pristina University. In fact, starting from 1974 until 1980, the number of Serbian employees in the public sector declined from 31% to 9.3% to 5%¹⁶¹. In a matter of six years, Serbs went from an overwhelming majority to a meager minority in all provincial institutions including local administration, the justice system and the police.

Certainly, the lack of employment opportunities, the tendency of media sources to increasingly broadcast and publish information in the Albanian language, the decline of the Serbo-Croat culture and education in the Province eventually led to the beginning of another migration of Slavs out of the autonomy. “The net emigration of Slavs from Kosovo in the decade 1971-81 was calculated at 102,000, which only served to reinforce a Serbian nationalist backlash.”¹⁶² Apart from economical and cultural reasons, another factor contributed significantly to the Slav migration which was insecurity accompanied by the physical and psychological pressure exerted by the Kosovo Albanians on the Serbs. Given the background of the gradual Albanization of the provincial institutions and the high birth rate of the Albanian population, the Serbs feared that they were being demographically dominated. They began to fear for their safety and to be marginalized by Albanians in the future.

The Serbian complaints usually included intimidation, robbery, theft of livestock, forced sales of homes below the market price and the unwillingness of the predominantly Albanian police and authorities to conduct investigations in a proper manner and prosecute perpetrators. “The air was thick with claims of intimidation of the Serbian and Montenegrin population by the local police, forced sales of property by Serbs, and even

¹⁶⁰ Simons, 310.

¹⁶¹ Petersen, 220.

¹⁶² Vickers, 213.

systematic rape of Serbian women as an instrument of ethnic repression.”¹⁶³ Although the majority of these accusations were not fully substantiated, two factors must be noted. First, in the decade of 1971-81 “of a total of 605 murders committed in Kosovo, Serbs were the victims of 503”¹⁶⁴. Second, an ethnic Albanian, Fadil Hoxha, a member of the Yugoslav Presidency admitted “there was undeniable evidence in the province of both ‘overt and covert’ forms of pressure on Serbs and Montenegrins to leave”¹⁶⁵.

Under the provisions of the Constitution of 1974, the Kosovo Albanians had obtained substantial economic, religious, political, and educational rights, not to mention that they had more freedoms and opportunities than Albanians in Albania. However, this was not sufficient to make them feel equal to other Yugoslav nations mostly because Kosovo Albanians were considered ineligible for republican status. This was one of the chief factors that contributed to the outburst of Albanian nationalism and separatism of the 1980’s starting with violent riots in 1981. Even though a majority of Kosovo Albanians were involved in demonstrations demanding further political and economic concessions from the federative government, apparently some were drawn to criminal activity against local Serbs.

This time, Serbs and Montenegrin citizens were beaten, their homes and businesses were burned, and their shops were looted. Kosovo’s Serb population were now seriously alarmed.¹⁶⁶

The Serbs were subject to various forms of pressure including physical assault on farmers and Orthodox priests and nuns, desecration of Serbian graves, and defacement of Orthodox Church property including the infamous arson of the Pec Patriarchate. “The number of reported cases of Albanian nationalism and separatism grew 22-fold between 1981 and 1988.”¹⁶⁷ “While not agreeing with all accusations, even today’s leader of Albanians in Kosovo Ibrahim Rugova, has admitted that Albanians did not behave as they should have and that some people were out of control during this period.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ Guzina, 37.

¹⁶⁴ Dick A. Leurdijk and Dick Zandee, *Kosovo: From Crisis to Crisis* (Ashgate Publishing House, 2001), 16.

¹⁶⁵ Vickers, 218.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 197.

¹⁶⁷ James Gow, *Legitimacy and the Military. The Yugoslav Crisis* (St. Martin’s Press, 1992), 128.

¹⁶⁸ Mertus, 22.

However, one of the major implications as well as unintended consequences of the outburst of Albanian nationalism in the decade of 1980-90 was the backlash of Serbian nationalism. The most negative feature of nationalism is that a national movement that preaches its values and abilities usually bluntly breaches the rights of other nations with a tremendous level of violence. Nationalism in all of its manifestations inevitably leads to a conflict.

D. BACKLASH OF SERBIAN NATIONALISM AND THE RISE OF MILOSEVIC TO POWER

Modern Serbian nationalism, often wrongly associated with the personality of the former Yugoslavian president Slobodan Milosevic, had began to take its destructive shape by the 1987 as a result of the decline of the Communist regime, the growing weakness of federal government, and the failure of the self-management economy. By 1983, Yugoslavia accumulated a foreign debt of 20 billion USD and the interest repayments alone constituted 5 billion USD annually¹⁶⁹.

For the first time, the Serbian population in Kosovo expressed their discontent over the situation in the province by signing a petition emphasizing Albanian nationalism and separatism on 15 January 1986. Later that year, the draft Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts signed by leading Serbian intellectuals was leaked to the press. "The Serbian Academy of Sciences spoke of '[t]he physical political legal and cultural genocide of the Serbian population in Kosovo' and Serbian nationalists felt that Kosovo, 'this most Serbian of lands,[was becoming] the least Serbian.'"¹⁷⁰ The Serbs become easily susceptible to nationalistic ideas and willingly embraced nationalisms because of the impact of significant political, economic or social changes on Yugoslav society.

In the case of Serbia, the role of nationalistic propaganda and influence of intellectuals and the national elite on national consciousness was immense. The Memorandum heavily criticized the 1974 constitution, articulated that under the Federation, the Serbian nation became divided, it acknowledged the deteriorating plight of the Serbian minority in Kosovo and called for an immediate reduction in the autonomy

¹⁶⁹ Mertus, Julie, 99.

¹⁷⁰ Constantine P. Danopoulos and Adem Chopani, "Albanian Nationalism and Prospect for Greater Albania," in *Crises in the Balkans*, ed. Constantine P. Danopoulos and Kostas G. Messas (Westview Press, 1997), 169-93.

of the province. “In this context, Albanian dominated Kosovo was seen as ‘a cancerous wound on the healthy body of Serbia, an area infected by the disease of *Shqiptarism* [Albanism], and the symbol of a betrayal of Serbian national interests.”¹⁷¹ The atmosphere in the society evolved into nationalist hysteria. “The Serbian leadership felt that an expansionist national ideology similar to those of the nineteenth century would yield the same results they did then.”¹⁷² Serbian mass demonstrations took place in different cities throughout Yugoslavia as “rallies for truth”. At the end of October 1987, the Federal riot police, together with army units, were deployed to Kosovo following demonstrations by thousands of Serbs.

On 4 June 1987, Slobodan Milosevic denounced the Memorandum arguing that the document is “nothing else but the darkest nationalism”¹⁷³. However, in his pursuit for power in competition with the Serbian president Ivan Stambolic, Milosevic made a tremendous shift towards Serbian nationalism. Milosevic

did not invent the national project that he was to use so efficiently; Serbia’s intelligentsia had furnished it ready-made. All he did was turn it into bellicose slogans.¹⁷⁴

Slobodan Milosevic, being an ordinary Party apparatchik, eventually became a political entrepreneur. Although originally he was in a modest position and largely condemned extreme nationalists within Serbian society in his conquest for political office and power, he hijacked the nationalist agenda and used it for his own personal gains.

Milosevic did not invent Serbian nationalism but he seized the real or imagined grievances of Kosovo Serbs in his quest for political office. He realized that the support of Serbs over the Kosovo issue could help him gain control over the Serbian League of Communists, and consequently, over the country. The conflict between Serbs and Albanians was given a new definition in that it was now considered an ethnic issue. Milosevic decided to assume the role of a national leader and protector of the Serbs in the province. Being a member of ideologues and the opportunistic elite, Milosevic used its

¹⁷¹ Constantine P. Danopoulos and Adem Chopani, 174.

¹⁷² Crnobrinja, Mihailo, *The Yugoslav Drama* (Montréal ; Buffalo : McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 229.

¹⁷³ Judah, “Kosovo,” 50.

¹⁷⁴ Mark Thompson, *A Paper House: The Ending of Yugoslavia* (London Hutchinson radius, 1992), 210.

program “[that] usually include identifying internal scapegoats (often minorities) responsible for the nation’s problems, exaggerating external threats, and calling for the mobilization and centralization of resources to do battle against the nation’s internal and external enemies”¹⁷⁵.

Milosevic won absolute public support by promising strong leadership in times of economic difficulties and social unrest that brought about the disintegration of the state. Exploiting the issue of Kosovo, he managed to crush any opposition to his takeover of the Communist Party. Given that, most Serbs, both within Serbia and Kosovo, would hardly accept the secession of Kosovo. Milosevic capitalized this sentiment using the issue of Kosovo to achieve his own political ambitions. For many Serbs, he was a new type of Communist leader who emphasized the ideas of Serbian statehood and the unity of a Serbian nation over the tenets of Marxism. “By shifting the political debate from ideology to the Serbian national interest Milosevic destroyed the prospect of Serbia’s transition to democracy.”¹⁷⁶ The increase of Serbian nationalism skillfully masterminded and exploited by Milosevic triggered a rise in the various competitive nationalistic movements throughout Yugoslavia.

It may sound cynical and may make no sense to some observers, but Milosevic’s rise to power in Yugoslavia would not have become possible without the actions, or rather inactions, of the Kosovo Albanians profoundly influenced by its leadership. “The political elite on each side understand each other perfectly well - only their immediate and long-term agendas directly conflict.”¹⁷⁷ Both Milosevic and Rugova needed each other in order to push further their own agendas. Both exploited grievances already existing in the general populace and manipulated the national consciousness of their people respectively to stay in power. “Serbian and Albanian leaders have used nationalism as a theory of political legitimacy to justify the political reality.”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Kupchan, Charles, *Nationalism and Nationalities in the New Europe* (Cornell University Press, 1995), 183.

¹⁷⁶ Judah, “Kosovo,” 54.

¹⁷⁷ Mertus, 232.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 233.

Ibrahim Rugova is often praised for his Gandhian style of non-violent resistance to Serbian authority. These tactics derived from the assumption that violence would be too costly and would negatively affect the Albanians more than the Serbs. However, the Albanian boycott of all Yugoslavian/Serbian elections, including the presidential elections of 1990 and 1992 as a part of peaceful resistance, had another side. Even though the multi-party elections of 1990 were considered free, and Rugova might have gained considerable power because Kosovo Albanians outnumbered Serbs in the province, he still refused to participate. Rugova received the widespread support of Kosovo Albanians because of his uncompromising demand for independence and sharp criticism of the Serbian administration. "He insisted that the Kosovars would never again recognize Serbian authority and that he would not last a single day as their leader if he brought them into electoral process."¹⁷⁹

Although according to the Kosovo Albanians' leadership rhetoric, participation in the presidential elections would mean that they recognize "the Serbian rule over their homeland"¹⁸⁰ and "Milosevic would manufacture the votes he needed in the same way as his regime printed as much money as needed"¹⁸¹, the participation of Albanians in elections could help to remove Milosevic from power.

The million Albanian votes could undoubtedly have ousted Milosevic, but as the Kosovar leadership admitted at that time, they did not want him to go. Unless Serbia continued to be labeled as profoundly evil - and they themselves, by virtue of being anti-Serb, as good guys - they were unlikely to achieve their goals. It would be a disaster for them if a peacemaker like Panic had restored human rights, since that would have left them with nothing but a bare political agenda to change borders.¹⁸²

Milosevic came to power on the wave of growing Serbian nationalistic sentiment and managed to stay in office for a decade despite the humiliating defeats in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina because he mastered nationalism to promote his political agenda. However, by unleashing powerful forces of nationalism he fell into his own trap. As a result of his role played during the negotiations in Dayton, Milosevic's support in

¹⁷⁹ Spencer, 15.

¹⁸⁰ Marc Weller, *The Crisis in Kosovo, 1989-1999*, Cambridge: Documents and Analyses, 1999.

¹⁸¹ Vickers, 268.

¹⁸² Ibidem.

Serbia started to decline sharply in favor of opposition leaders. However, according to Senator Biden during his meeting held with opposition leaders, he found out that they were more Serbian than Milosevic. “They were literally, literally, literally critical of Milosevic for being too accommodating.”¹⁸³ In addition, some Serbian radical nationalists accused him of betraying the Great Serbian cause and blame him for the failure to create a unified Serbdom, or in other words, a betrayal of Serbian national interests. During the presidential elections held in 1997, the leader of the ultranationalist Serbian Radical Party, Vojislav Seselj, posed a direct challenge to Milosevic because he was close to receiving a majority of the votes¹⁸⁴.

Therefore, any concessions made to Kosovo Albanians would literally mean political death to Milosevic. After compromises made in both Croatia and Bosnia, Kosovo became too important to Milosevic’s political career to lose. His own political survival was much more important than finding a peaceful solution to growing inter-ethnic tensions in Kosovo and its future status. By the summer of 1989, with a significant increase in KLA activity and as a result of a growing number of victims, Belgrade’s authority leaned towards a military solution. According to the former Serbian Prime Minister, Mirko Marjanovic, since the beginning of 1998, the KLA conducted 1,273 terrorist attacks that resulted in 140 civilians dead and 107 wounded, 94 police officers killed and 233 wounded, and 249 people kidnapped.¹⁸⁵

During the meeting held between General Wesley Clark and the former Yugoslav president Milosevic in October 1998, he tried to convince the former that Belgrade is able to solve the looming crisis:

¹⁸³ Hearings Before the Subcommittee on European Affairs of Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate (Washington, D.C.: Committee on Foreign Affairs, 1998)

¹⁸⁴ More detailed information including the turn-over of votes is available at <http://www.cesid.org/cd-eng/htm/s-zbir.htm>

¹⁸⁵ BBC Monitoring Europe - Political Supplied by BBC World wide Monitoring, September 29, 1998 as accessed on 20 January 2004 at <http://www.nexis.com>.

...he said you know General Clark... we know how to handle problems with these Albanian killers. I said, well how do you do that? He said, we have done this before, I said when, he said Drenica 1946. I said how did you handle it? He said we kill them, all of them. He said it took several years but we kill them all.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ Dick A. Leurdijk and Dick Zandee, 63.

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V. CONCLUSIONS

The conflict in Kosovo has a long-standing history about two peoples, the Kosovo Serbs and Albanians, who have never lived together, but rather, have been living next to each other. In short, the problem derived from the relations between these two peoples and their conflicting national identities. Their contradicting positions developed throughout a turbulent and complicated history of the region. They also have their own visions and interpretations of the region's history that significantly impact their claims over the territory of Kosovo and formulate their demands.

Violence has been the norm rather than the exception in their relationship throughout the history of the region. Domination of one ethnic group by the other has always characterized the situation in Kosovo. Whoever, either the Serbs or Albanians, gains control over the region, even temporarily as a result of wars or changes in the political arrangement of the state, has always tried to eliminate the traces of the presence of the other nation by desecration of religious monuments, assault and pillage on representatives of the other ethnic group and the forceful movement of the population. In each case, the goal was the demographic transformation of Kosovo. However, very often, the Serbs and Albanians switched their roles from victims to perpetrators and back again.

Both the Serbs and Albanians regard Kosovo as an indispensable trait of their national identities and spiritual and cultural centers of their civilizations. In fierce competition to establish control over Kosovo, they joined a protracted conflict lasting roughly 130 years that began with the Russo-Turkish war of 1876-1878 when Serbia and Montenegro conquered the northern and eastern parts of Kosovo. On the other hand, significant changes in the ethnic distribution and demographic upheaval in favor of Albanians caused by the five centuries long Ottoman rule, associated with the gradual Islamization and Albanization of the region, was a necessary prerequisite for the conflict.

Since the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918, all successive Yugoslav governments had encountered the most pressing problem of "national questions." In the perpetual attempt to keep the multinational state united by

maintaining ethno-national balance and the suppression of various secessionist movements, they were inclined to use forceful means. Given that the Serbs dominated interwar Yugoslavian state institutions and constituted a majority in the Communist party and ruling elite in the postwar period, the Albanians always perceived the central authority as a mere extension of the Serbian regime. Therefore, the authoritarian character of the government in both royalist and communist Yugoslavia was confused by the ethnicity of the oppressor.

From 1945 onward, the Communist Party and the strong leadership of Marshal Josef Broz Tito held Yugoslavia together as a federation. Despite the Communist attempts to propagate Yugoslav national consciousness and create a society based on the tenets of Marxism-Leninism, the ethnic, religious and other primordial loyalties did not disappear. On the contrary, since the divisions between the classes in a socialist society were minimal or supposed to be minimal and citizens of different ethnic background could belong to the same class, the ethnic and religious types of identity prevailed nonetheless.

The post-war policies only exacerbated the nationality question and did little to solve it. Moreover, the balance of power distributed along ethnic lines within Kosovo evolved over the post World War II period. Immediately after the war, due to objective reasons, the Serbs dominated all provincial institutions including the Party apparatus, local administration, justice system and police. By the beginning of the 1970's, as a result of the process of emancipation of the Kosovo Albanians, they eventually gained control over the administration in Kosovo.

The gradual enhancement of the autonomy of Kosovo during the Tito era added more grievances to the complicated relations between the Serbs and Albanians. Even though under the provisions of the Constitution of 1974, the Kosovo Albanians had obtained substantial economic, religious, political, and cultural rights and Kosovo practically became equal to any other subject of the federation including the right to enter into agreements and negotiations with foreign states¹⁸⁷, the Albanians were not satisfied

¹⁸⁷ According to Article 293 of the Kosovo constitution that autonomy was allowed by the Yugoslav Constitution of 1974, the autonomous province was authorized "to make contact and enter into agreements with organs and organizations of foreign states." For more information, see Sabrina P. Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia, 1962-1991* (Indiana University Press, 1992), 77.

with their status. The main reason was that albeit the Province was a republic in all the aspects except name, the right of secession from the federation was denied the Kosovo Albanians even though it was accorded to any other republic with its constituent nation. Thus, the Albanians were not considered equal to other Yugoslav nations.

The Serbs, in turn, highly criticized the Constitution because according to their view, the Albanians not only “enjoyed rights unparalleled by any other minority in the world”¹⁸⁸, but they did so to the Serbs’ detriment and at their expense. In addition, as a result of the Constitution of 1974, two ethnic groups found themselves in a paradoxical situation. While the Serbs constituted a majority within the Socialist Republic of Serbia, they represented only a tiny minority in the Autonomous Province of Kosovo, whereas the Albanians, being a predominant ethnic group in the region, were considered a minority within the SFRY. The failure of the Communist regime to accommodate contradictory national interests and ease the existing tensions in the framework of the federation led to the deepening of the economic and cultural divisions between the Serbs and the Albanians.

Widespread discontent over the poor economical performance, decreasing living standards and growing unemployment provoked massive violent demonstrations by the Albanians throughout Kosovo. The harsh repressive response of Yugoslav authorities stimulated Albanian national sentiments and pressed them to claim territorial sovereignty. On the other hand, the outburst of Albanian nationalism in the decade of 1980-90 fostered the rise of Serbian nationalism.

The escalation of violence between the Kosovo Albanians and Serbs in 1998-99 in Kosovo was not inevitable but highly probable considering the animosity that existed in the society by the beginning of the 1990’s. Moreover, the general atmosphere of resentment, disillusion over the existing political arrangement of the state, and nationalistic propaganda became catalysts for the polarization of Kosovo society along ethnic lines. Political entrepreneurs on both sides magnified the real or imagined grievances by reverting to historical memories, myths and emotions, and as a result, propelled this process further.

¹⁸⁸ Guzina, 38.

The shortfalls of the Yugoslav system became especially evident in the wider context of the political transformation of Eastern and Central Europe, when nationalistically driven elites reintroduced ancient sources of the conflict and instrumentalized ethnic and religious loyalties in favor of their specific political agendas. Even though it seems as if the hard core of the conflict in Kosovo is political, economical and territorial in nature without the existence of an intrinsic cultural and ethnic differences, it would hardly take its devastating form.

With the absence of democratic institutions able to mediate between competing Serbs and Albanians and the declining ability of the federative authorities to maintain ethnic peace and stability, the two ethnic groups became amalgamated behind nationalistic leaders who promised to promote national interests. The culture of victimization of one's own ethnic group and demonizing the other's, the unwillingness of both peoples to cooperate with each other, and the readiness of Serbian authorities to employ force to solve the growing crisis in Kosovo, triggered the vicious cycle that eventually pulled the region into violence. "It had been predicted that, if there [in Yugoslavia] was to be a war, it would break out in Kosovo."¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ Judah, "Kosovo," 59.

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